Genes Aren't Everything FRANCIS COLLINS

THE NEW REPUBLIC

Meg Greenfield's Washington NICHOLAS LEMANN

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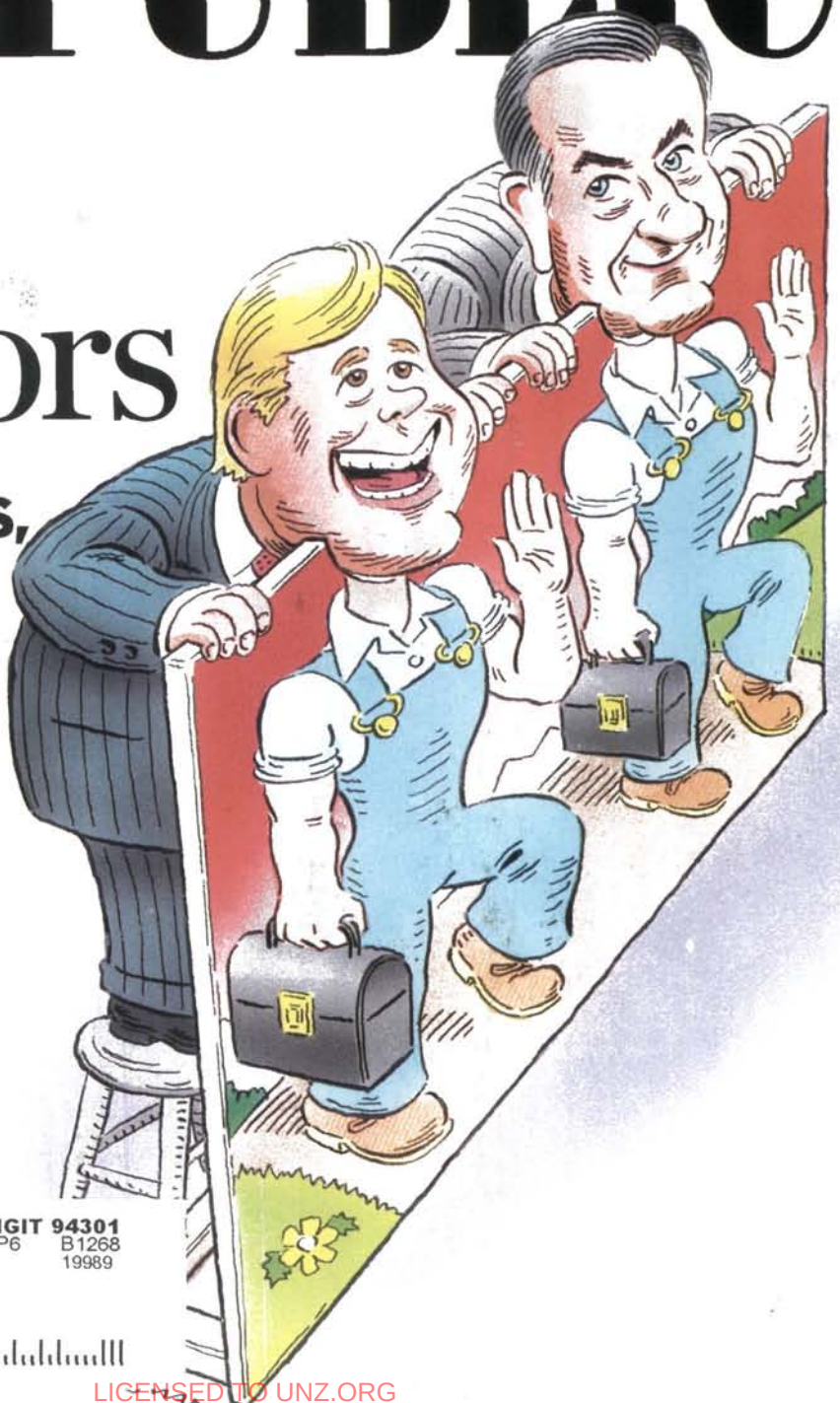
UNE 25, 2001

Class Warriors

CHRIS MATTHEWS, BILL O'REILLY, AND THE DECLINE OF POPULISM

By NOAM SCHEIBER



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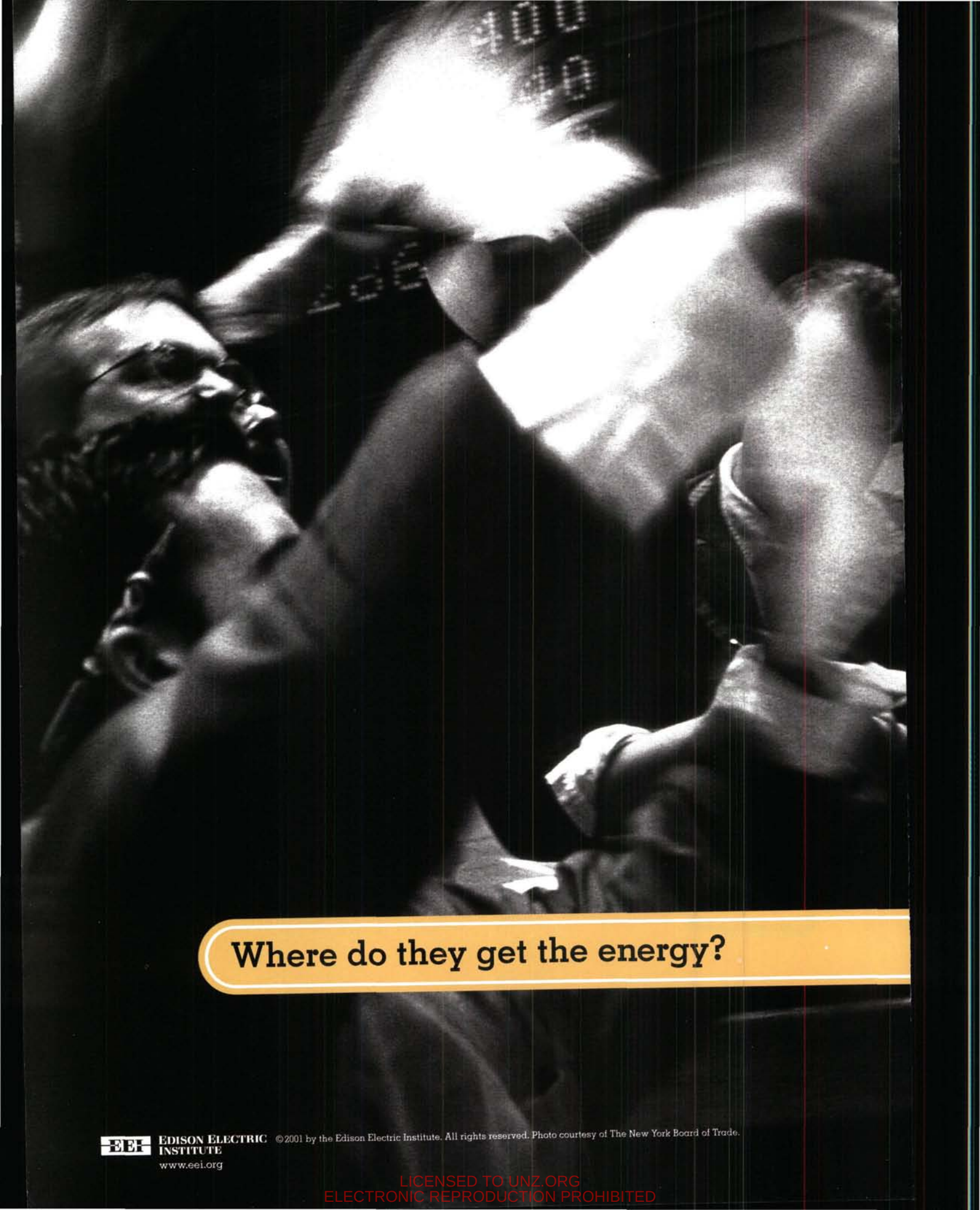

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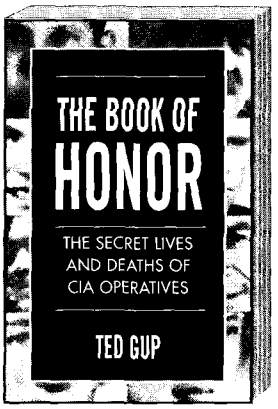

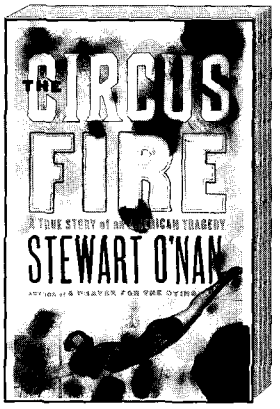

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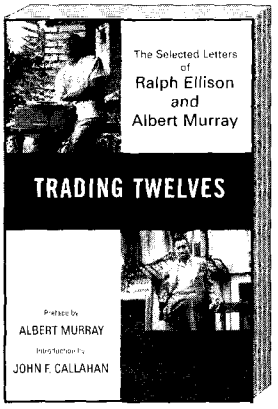

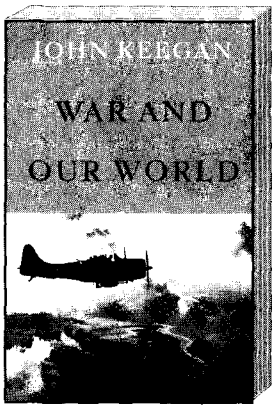

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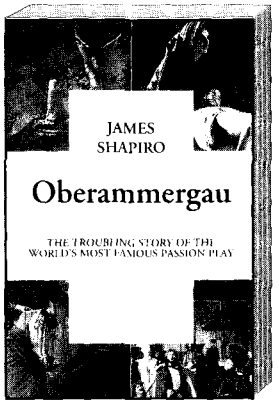

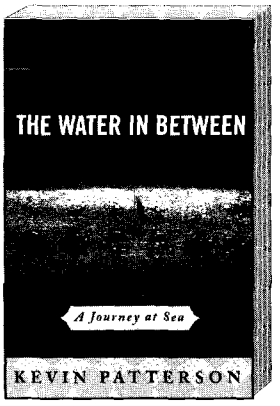

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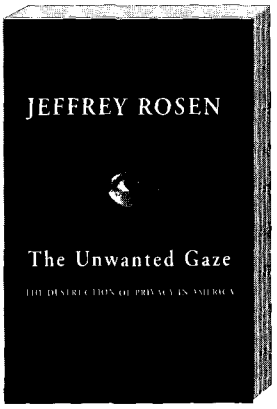

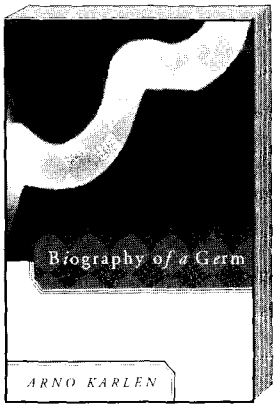

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THE NEW REPUBLIC

A Journal of Politics and the Arts

WASHINGTON, D.C.
JUNE 25, 2001
ISSUE 4,510

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On the Cover : Illustration by ROBERT GROSSMAN
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THE NEW REPUBLIC, Vol. 224, Number 26, Issue 4,510, June 25, 2001. (Printed in the United States on June 13, 2001.) Published weekly (except for combined issues dated January 1 & 8, April 9 & 16, July 9 & 16, August 27 & September 3, 2001 and December 31, 2001 & January 7, 2002) at 1220 19th Street, NW, Washington, D.C. 20036. Telephone (202) 331-7494. For advertising inquiries, please contact Ann Rossaki at (202) 331-7494 or our NY sales office at (212) 924-8700. Yearly subscriptions, $59.94; foreign, $99.94 (U.S. funds); Canada, $79.94 (U.S. funds). Back issues, $4.00 (includes postage & handling). **© 2001 by The New Republic, Inc.** **(ISSN 0028-6583). Periodicals postage paid at Washington, D.C., and additional mailing offices. Rights and permissions: fax (202) 331-0275. Indexed in Readers' Guide, Media Review Digest. Microform, Canadian Periodical Index, CD-ROM, issue, and article copies are available through University Microfilms Intnl., 300 N. Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48106. Telephone 1-800-521-0600. Postmaster: Send changes of address to The New Republic, P.O. Box 37298, Boone, IA 50037-0298. Member, Audit Bureau of Circulations. Unsolicited manuscripts can be returned only if accompanied by a self-addressed, stamped envelope (e-mail address: tnr@aol.com). For subscription inquiries or problems call 1-800-827-1289 or visit our website at www.thenewrepublic.com.**

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CORRESPONDENCE

Coordinated campaign

TO THE EDITORS:

Peter Beinart raises an interesting point in "Going Stronger" (May 21): Why can't exponents of liberal causes work together on a single issue the way conservative factions agree on the importance of lowering taxes? As the author of *Reflections in Bullough's Pond*, I believe that addressing our environmental crises is paramount. My husband, Paul Appelbaum, president-elect of the American Psychiatric Association, wants to deliver excellent medical care to all Americans. My sister, Jean Gulliver, chairwoman of the Maine State Board of Education, wants to give children from deprived and rural backgrounds a quality education.

What can we all agree on? Campaign reform, of course. Making sure that votes cast in poor neighborhoods are counted. If all the liberal interest groups united to take the money out of politics, we could then go on to address the environment, health care, and education with a hope of real success.

DIANA MUIR
Newton, Massachusetts

Stifled

TO THE EDITORS:

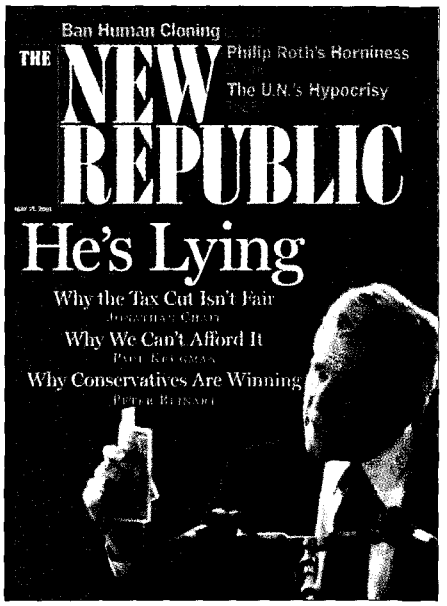
Jonathan Chait is right that George W. Bush can force his tax cut through only by stifling debate on the subject ("Going for Gold," May 21). Conservatives will never admit to the true heart of their motives: that government and wealthy Americans owe nothing to either the society that provides the playing field for their social and economic power base or to the less fortunate. To do so would draw far too much attention to the hypocrisy and conflict between the Republican economic agenda and the "moral" values of the religious right. If all national issues were painted as clearly as Chait's article portrayed them, Americans would realize that core Democratic economic policies benefit them far more than does the exclusionary conservative agenda.

KELLY KILROY
Tampa, Florida

Trust-busting

TO THE EDITORS:

In his fine article on the fiscal dishonesty at the heart of the Bush tax plan ("Going for Broke," May 21), Paul Krugman mistakenly states that Part B of Medicare (supplementary medical insurance) does not rely on a trust fund. Actually, it does;



but since the Part B trust fund automatically draws most of its revenues from current income tax receipts, there is no reason for it to run a surplus—as does the Part A (hospital insurance) trust fund, which is financed with payroll contributions from current workers. Krugman is still correct about the Bush administration's motives in transferring spending from Part A to Part B—namely, to blow the Part A trust fund surplus on a tax cut that honest fiscal accounting would show the nation can ill afford.

JACOB S. HACKER
Junior Fellow
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Harvard University
Cambridge, Massachusetts

Reactions

TO THE EDITORS:

I wonder if your readers were struck, as I was, by the oddity of Martin Peretz referring to a democratic secular state platform as "very irrelevant, very stupid" ("Honors," May 21). Is the American Constitution or even the new and revered South African constitution just as stupid or irrelevant? Do our brothers and sisters in Israel/Palestine deserve less? The reality today is that five million Israeli Jews control the lives of four million Palestinians and other non-Jews, either through military occupation or second-class citizenship. Peretz's goal of preserving a Jewish-ethnic supremacy at the cost of true democracy and equality is an increasingly reckless platform and, if I might sling back, reactionary. Peace Now's rejection of the Palestinian refugees' right of return is actually an anti-peace platform for millions of Palestinians. As Peretz argues about my Bunting peace fellowship at Radcliffe, just because the organization calls itself Peace Now does not mean that it holds a monopoly on what constitutes peace.

ALLEGRA PACHECO
Bunting Fellowship Program
Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study
Harvard University
Cambridge, Massachusetts

TO THE EDITORS:

It pains me to see Neil Rudenstine being severely criticized in a magazine so close to my heart. It may be that Rudenstine has not been the most flamboyant president in Harvard University's history; but he has done extraordinary things behind the scenes, through patience and persuasion, in a manner reflective of a modest and gracious nature. Nor has he been the boring, unimaginative fund-raiser depicted in your pages. The money he helped to raise was not just to inflate an already bloated endowment. It was also to empower the traditionally underfunded central administration for the purpose of strengthening more unprotected and impoverished areas of the university, notably the arts and the humanities. Rudenstine's remarkable qualities have yet to be correctly estimated.

ROBERT BRUSTEIN
Cambridge, Massachusetts

Soul righteousness

TO THE EDITORS:

In "Error of Commission" (May 21), THE NEW REPUBLIC states that the Bush administration is guilty of diplomatic failure while the countries that voted the United States off the U.N. Human Rights Commission are "guilty of moral failure." TNR further argues that "many European governments view moral questions as a bothersome distraction from the realpolitik that dominates the European diplomatic tradition." I have, of late, started to resent this American feeling of sole righteousness. True, America speaks out for civil rights; but it mostly acts as a superpower and breaks rules when it sees a need to. While there was a case for defending human rights in Iraq, the main reason for the Gulf war was realpolitik—the need for the United States to remain in control of oil reserves.

The United States uses human rights as one of many ways to wield power and influence in the world. It may as well not

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First measure, then fix

Recently, the House of Representatives passed the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). Its centerpiece is a requirement that states conduct annual math and reading tests for grades three to eight, and that schools that consistently fail to meet standards would be held accountable.

ESEA is a way to ensure that educational systems across the country can improve what they are supposed to do, which is to educate every child.

Businesses all across America have for many years promoted improvements in public education. One prominent group, the Business Roundtable (BRT), has identified a variety of components for a successful education system. Three are especially relevant:

First, educational standards are needed to define what students can be expected to know. It is unfair to evaluate people, in school or business, if they do not understand what is expected of them.

Second, an educational system needs to measure the performance of students and schools relative to the standards. It is impossible to tell where there are problems, and what might be the causes, if performance is not measured. Without measurement, it is also impossible to tell whether changes are working.

Third, an educational system needs to be accountable for results. If students are underperforming, local leaders, schools, teachers, parents and the students themselves need to face the facts. Corrective actions appropriate to each locality must be taken, because the only sensible goal is to ensure that children are educated.

These core elements set up a system that will improve itself. The ways the improvements come are too numerous to list, but they can include more money for teachers and facilities, additional teacher training, new materials, options for parents to move children to other schools, charter schools and much more.

Improving education requires standard setting, measurement and accountability

The key point is that only by setting standards, measuring results, and holding educational systems accountable can improvements be made and sustained.

Most parents seem to agree. The BRT has surveyed parents and found that 83 percent support higher standards, and more than three-quarters see their value in evaluating the performance of teachers and schools.

As a company that depends on a highly educated and technically proficient workforce, we have a stake in seeing more American students fully capable of entering a new technological society. But the real reasons for improving education go far beyond business needs. A well-educated citizenry is a core strength of the United States, and an opportunity for a good education is something owed to every child.

Making good on helping provide that opportunity now rests with the Senate, which should join the House in passing the Elementary and Secondary Education Act.

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TRB

FROM WASHINGTON

Blair Play

To call a landslide election victory ambivalent might seem a little perverse. But Tony Blair's crushing win in Britain last week was notable for how little it really presaged. The turnout was the lowest since 1918. Blair's share of the vote—43 percent—was far lower than George W. Bush's (or, for that matter, Al Gore's) last year. When you look at the geography of the result, you see yet another red/blue split, with rural constituencies voting Tory; urban ones voting Labour; the Celtic fringes of Scotland, Wales, and the Southwest voting idiosyncratically; and Northern Ireland following its own tortured path (this time against candidates who supported the Good Friday peace accord).

And when you look at the actual policies at stake in the election, Blair's victory seems even fuzzier. Neither party vowed to increase income taxes much beyond the rates of the Thatcher-Major years; both promised to devote imminent surpluses to public services, especially health and education. The differences between the Tories and Labour on taxes and spending were trivial. Blair shrewdly defused his main liability—his support for the abolition of the pound—by promising a referendum within two years. And he tacked to the right in the campaign, pledging to bring the private sector more thoroughly into the provision of public services—an idea pioneered by Margaret Thatcher.

Since his reelection, Blair has stacked his Cabinet with the equivalent of New Democrats. The right American analogy is 1996, when Bill Clinton crushed Bob Dole by capturing the center before squandering his political capital with such panache. Blair must fear a similarly troublesome second term. Already the British labor movement is grumbling about reforms in the cushy, decrepit public sector. The new foreign secretary, Jack Straw, was an early enthusiast for welfare reform and is far more of a Euroskeptic than his predecessor. Another thoroughly reconstructed lefty, David Blunkett, is now the fourth-most-powerful minister and is being touted as a future leader—to counteract the more traditional Labourite Gordon Brown. Blair's "project" to remake Labour as a governing party of the center, therefore, continues at full steam. In fact, it was the critical element in retaining the middle-class support he first won in 1997.

But that project will now face its toughest test. In his first four years, Blair proved Labour could be an effective steward of the economy. In domestic economic policy, he did what Clinton and Gore did in their first term. What he didn't do was what Clinton and Gore did in social policy and trade: reform welfare and expand free trade, two critical breaches of paleoliberal orthodoxy. The British welfare state remains largely what it was, and free trade has remained a shibboleth inherited from the Tories. And if Blair is to succeed in revitalizing health care and education in Britain, he has little choice but to resort to policies once pioneered by conservatives—privatization, deregulation, competition, and choice. So far Blair has talked the talk, but he hasn't actually challenged the health care unions, teachers' unions, and the entire socialist wait-in-line ethic of British public services. If he does, he may entrench middle-class support for New Labour—but at the cost of splitting his own party, cementing Thatcherism for good, and removing Labour's one key political advantage over the Tories: a commitment to public services. He also has to survive his promised referendum on the euro, a subject on which the Tories enjoy the support of 70 percent of the country. No wonder the mood in Westminster is subdued, landslide notwithstanding.

The election's more interesting impact will probably be on the right. I forgave some of William Hague's leadership errors out of old friendship and dogged hope. But there's no mistaking the fact that signing on to Labour's commitment to public investment, while retaining populist stances on immigration, crime, and the EU, was the worst of all possible worlds. He wasn't helped by his cold-fish demeanor or his baritone Yorkshire drawl. He was, and is, a decent man, as his dignified resignation indicated. He'll be back.

But his policies, with any luck, will be abandoned. The new leader will probably be Michael Portillo, a former right-wing fire-breather and defense secretary under John Major. Portillo, whose father was a Portuguese immigrant, has what Hague doesn't have: good looks, charisma, and style. He has also shown something Hague never revealed: a weak side. A few years back, after subterranean attempts to out him, Portillo spoke to the press about his homosexual love life in college. He's married to a woman now, but the experience of being hounded in the tabloids about his gay past, frowned on by Tory bigots and demonized by left-wing gays, seems to have changed him. This week he has begun to sketch a future for conservatism that will have as much salience in the United States as in Britain.

Portilloism, if you'll forgive the term, is the opposite of Haguism: It's a blend of social liberalism and fiscal conservatism. Portillo seems to understand that conservatives have to reach out to racial minorities, women, and homosexuals if they are to win back the cities and suburbs of the new England. But he also seems to grasp that this is not incompatible with another assault on the overreaching, suffocating welfare state. A dramatic expansion of private health care, more autonomy and independence for local schools, lower taxes, and fewer regulations—these are appealing to people of any ethnic background, gender, or orientation. The new conservatism need not abandon its roots in small government, personal responsibility, and greater freedom in order to bring these ideas to new constituencies, new communities, and a new generation. And Portillo, if he doesn't weaken his fiscal conservatism, may be just the right messenger.

He will also face a more immediate task. Within two years, the British will be asked essentially to dissolve their own nation. The point of the euro is not some kind of economic progress; it is a crucial stage in the creation of a single, social democratic, anti-American, European state. The last hope for derailing this scheme lies in the newly democratic countries of the former Communist East and the oldest European democracy in the West. As the EU expands to bring in more states from the East, the union's sheer economic diversity will make it harder and harder to impose one currency and one interest rate on the entire region. Look at how the Irish last week rebelled against Brussels because their dynamic small economy has nothing in common with Germany and shouldn't, in any rational world, be run according to the same policies.

But the Brits have a more philosophical task. They have to make the strong and good case that it is not xenophobic or anti-European to oppose the euro or a European federal state. It's no more xenophobic than Canada's retention of a currency separate from the United States'. In fact, a more economically flexible Europe will be a more successful Europe; and a Europe based on nation-states rather than on a federal bureaucracy will be a more democratic Europe. Perhaps it will take a bisexual Tory son of a Portuguese immigrant to make this case convincingly. But more than the future of the Tory Party depends on whether he succeeds.

ANDREW SULLIVAN

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Spoiled

IF YOU WANTED to produce a report on the Florida election that had absolutely no chance of winning bipartisan support, here's what you'd do. First, you'd imply that Florida's Republican election officials were racist, even though you didn't have any proof.

Which is exactly what the eight-member U.S. Civil Rights Commission did when it wrote, in its report on the Florida election released last week, that "[t]he disenfranchisement of Florida's voters fell most harshly on the shoulders of African-Americans." But that implies that someone was doing the disenfranchising. And the implication is wrong—no official set out deliberately to keep Florida's blacks from voting. But the commission wouldn't unequivocally say that. The report admitted that it found no "conclusive evidence" that the state's highest officials "conspired to produce the disenfranchisement of voters." But it didn't find any *inconclusive* evidence either. The report could have performed a valuable service had it firmly put to rest rumors of a conspiracy. Instead, it has let them linger.

Second, you'd leak a draft of the report to the press before the commission's two Republican-appointed members had seen it. When Florida Governor Jeb Bush asked to review the full document, you'd refuse. And when Republicans complained about being locked out, you'd accuse them of sour grapes. All of which ensured that the vote adopting the report would be split on partisan lines and that Governor Bush would denounce it as "biased and sloppy." And so a report that took months of work and 100 witnesses to produce will likely hinder the cause of electoral reform it was meant to promote.

Which is a pity, because the data in the report (as opposed to the rhetoric) make a compelling case that spoiled ballots are a problem both parties should take seriously. According to the report, Gadsden County, in Florida's panhandle, had both the highest spoilage rate (12.4 percent) of Florida's 67 counties and the state's highest percentage of African American residents (63 percent). Indeed, in examining the ten Florida counties with the highest percentages of African American residents and African American voters, the commission found that nine had spoilage rates higher than the Florida average of 2.93 percent. When, by contrast, the commission looked at spoilage rates in the ten counties with the highest percentages of white residents and white voters, it found that only two had spoilage rates higher than the state average. In an analysis conducted for the commission, Allan Lichtman, a professor of history at American University and an elections expert, determined that African Americans were nearly ten times as likely as whites to have their ballots rejected.

Was this racism? Probably not. A less ideological, more bipartisan commission might have highlighted Dixie County, which is predominantly poor and white and also had a higher rate of spoiled ballots than the state average. In fact, had the commission looked closely at class as well as race, it might well have produced a report Republicans could embrace. Because, in large measure, Florida's voting problems were economic: a lack of modern technology in many of its poorer counties. When ballots were counted by optical-scan machines located within polling stations—as in most of Florida's richer counties—only 0.8 percent of ballots were rejected. That's largely because if the scanner rejected a ballot, the voter was often still present to correct the error. But when ballots were counted by scanning machines in a central location, or when punch-card ballots were used—as was the case in most of Florida's poor, predominantly African American counties—4 percent of ballots were rejected. Counties that used punch cards or optical scanners in central locations accounted for 65 percent of all ballots cast but 90 percent of all ballots spoiled.

Eliminating punch-card ballots and locating optical scanners on-site need not be an ideological or partisan issue. Indeed, even before the report, the Florida legislature and Jeb Bush approved a sweeping ballot-reform measure that decertifies punch-card machines and requires second-chance technology that would immediately determine whether voters have made mistakes. The real question now is whether Congress will give other states the money to do the same thing. Senators Charles Schumer, Robert Torricelli, Mitch McConnell, and Sam Brownback have sponsored the Bipartisan Federal Election Reform Act, which would provide $2.5 billion in grants for states seeking to upgrade their voting technology and procedures. The bill stands a good chance of passing, but only if Republicans believe electoral reform isn't a political weapon meant to undermine the GOP. And it's not. Too bad no one told the U.S. Civil Rights Commission. ■

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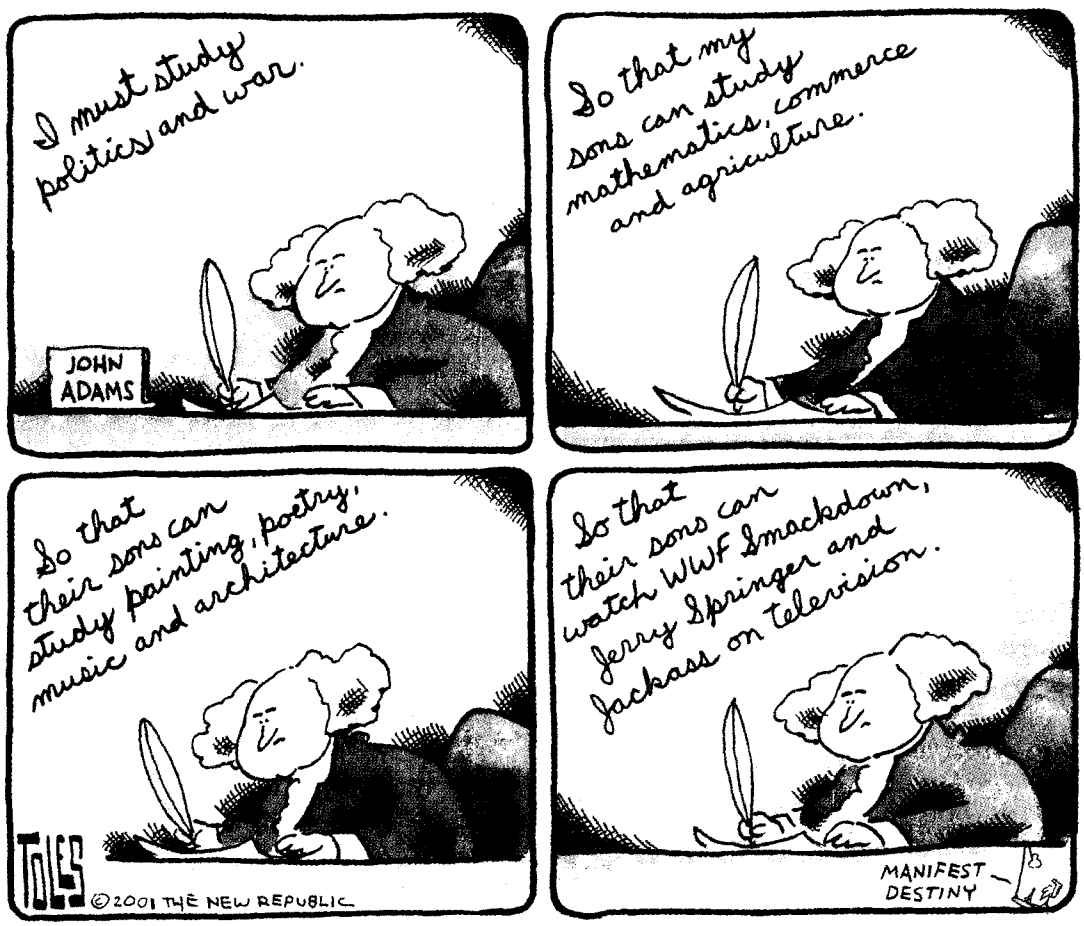
NOTEBOOK

IT DEPENDS ON WHAT THE MEANING OF "NEVER" IS: Turns out George W. Bush's 1997 tax cut isn't the only part of his gubernatorial legacy that Texas legislators now regret. Both houses of the Texas legislature last month passed bills outlawing executions of the mentally retarded—bills Bush's successor, Rick Perry, is now considering whether to sign. But the president must be a little confused as to why they are going through all the trouble: Listening to him, you'd assume capital punishment for the mentally retarded was illegal when he was governor, too. Pressed by a group of European journalists last Monday, Bush declared, "We should never execute anybody who is mentally retarded." "Never" would presumably rule out the execution of murderer Mario Marquez, who had the functional capacity of a seven-year-old. And yet, hours before Bush's 1995 inauguration as governor of Texas, his staff agreed to proceed with the execution. Bush was also unmoved by clemency petitions for Terry Washington, executed in 1997; Oliver Cruz, executed last year (as Bush was popularizing the phrase "compassionate conservative"); or Johnny Paul Penry, who was scheduled for execution in November but whose death sentence has since been halted by the Supreme Court. Nor does Bush's sudden distaste for executing the retarded explain his opposition to a 1999 bill outlawing such executions (a bill that was weaker than the current one, since it exempted only defendants with IQs lower than 65, rather than the more common mental-retardation threshold of 70). Following Bush's abrupt conversion, White House spinners were quickly sent out to explain that although the president spoke exactly as he'd intended, his statement was "not a change of policy." The president, they made clear, was simply using a different definition of the word "retarded" than the legally accepted one. But at least he was abiding by the commonly accepted definition of the word "coward."

DO WHAT WE DO, NOT WHAT WE'D LIKE TO DO: Europeans, we are told over and over, are furious with W. for backing the death penalty under any circumstances at all. French Foreign Minister Hubert Vedrine told *Le Monde* that American support for capital punishment "illustrates the growing difference in mindset on either side of the Atlantic." "Even justified killing makes us murderers," lectured the German daily *Bild*. "We must say no to the avenging beast in us." *Le Monde* even published a front-page cartoon depicting a stadium filled with Americans watching an execution as if it were the Super Bowl. And the American press has dutifully reported on this vast cultural divide. *The New York Times* editorialized: "One of the things President Bush will discover as he makes his way through Europe this week is that America's moral authority as a global champion of individual and human rights is being seriously undermined by the nation's reliance on the death penalty." In fact, as Joshua Micah Marshall noted in these pages (see "Death in Venice," July 31, 2000), the reason European nations eschew the death penalty isn't that they're more civilized—it's that they're less democratic. Large swaths of the European public actually support the death penalty. In France, a majority of the population backed the death penalty's reinstatement during most of the 1980s and '90s; a poll two years ago was the first in which support dipped below 50 percent. The death penalty is backed by roughly half of Italians, between two-thirds and three-quarters of Brits (about the same percentage as in the U.S.), and 49 percent of Swedes, according to a 1997 poll. The real continental divide is noblesse oblige—in Europe, elites are united against the death penalty, and parliamentary systems allow them to ban


I must study politics and war.
JOHN ADAMS
So that my sons can study mathematics, commerce and agriculture.
So that their sons can study painting, poetry, music and architecture.
So that their sons can watch WWF Smackdown, Jerry Springer and Jackass on television.
TOLES
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MANIFEST DESTINY

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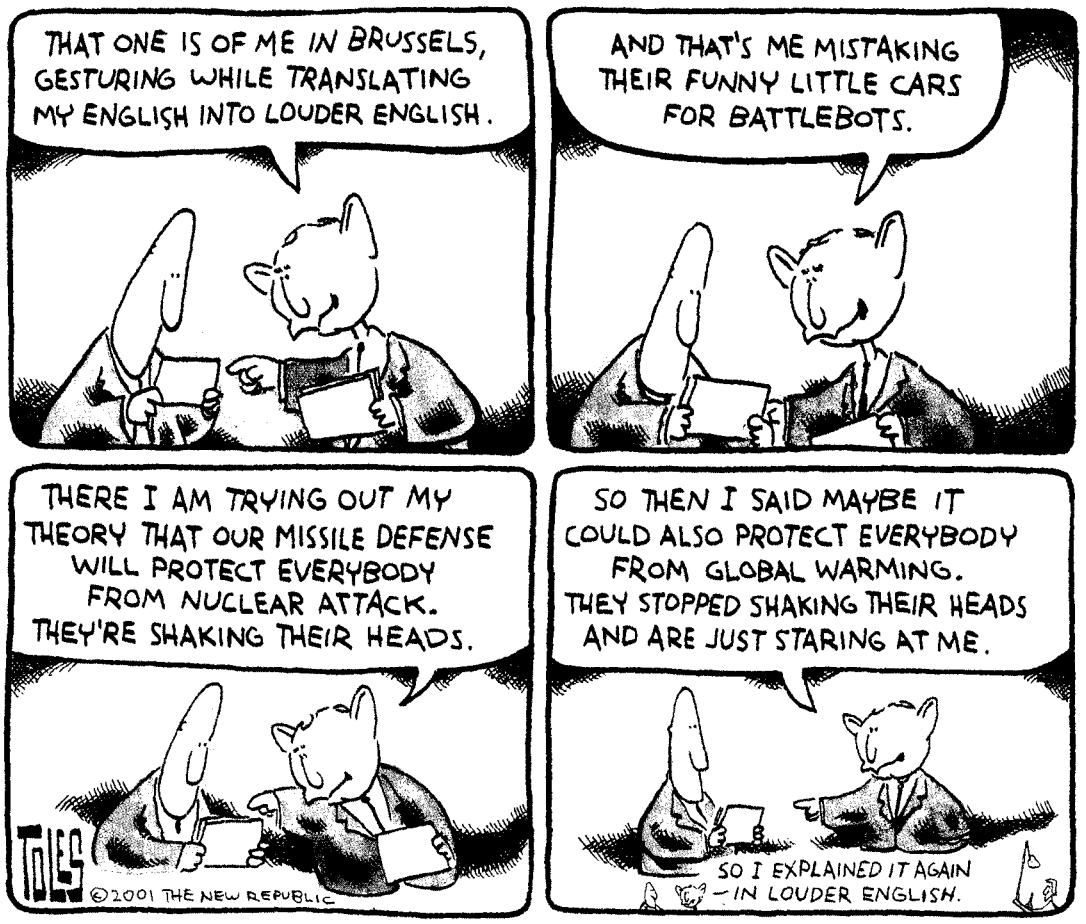
it even in the face of the popular will. Does this mean European lectures on the immorality of the death penalty should carry no weight? Of course not—merely that leaders should address them to their own publics first.

OLD HABITS DIE HARD: When Bill Clinton was president, North Carolina Senator Jesse Helms routinely blocked his nominees, refusing to allow the Senate to conduct confirmation hearings. Sometimes, after exacting concessions, he'd allow the nomination to go through, as in the case of Richard Holbrooke's appointment to serve as ambassador to the United Nations. Other times, Helms would refuse to budge, and the offending nomination—for example, William Weld's bid to become ambassador to Mexico—would be withdrawn. Either way, Republicans loved Helms's obstructionism, treating his nickname—"Senator No"—as an honorific. But now that Bush is president, the GOP is finding Helms's political extortions a little less endearing. In May, the North Carolina septuagenarian placed holds on six administration nominees to the Treasury Department in an effort to express his displeasure with the way the department was interpreting a provision in a Caribbean trade bill passed last year. According to Helms, the trade law, as it is currently interpreted, harms his home state's textile industry. (So much for the vaunted Republican devotion to free trade.) And, until the administration interprets differently, those Treasury nominees aren't going anywhere. As a goodwill gesture, Helms recently lifted his hold on two of the nominees, but the other four remain in limbo. Helms's conservative brethren, not surprisingly, are furious. Writing in *The Wall Street Journal* last week, conservative columnist Paul Gigot complained about Helms's holds on the Treasury officials and derided the practice in general as "an excuse for individual senators of both parties, right and left, to blackmail the White House at will." Of course, four years ago, when Helms was blocking Weld's nomination, Gigot saw things a bit differently. "I don't think it's a big deal," Gigot told PBS's Jim Lehrer. "I think it's great theater, it's great entertainment." Entertained now, Paul?

THE "I'M RUBBER, YOU'RE GLUE" DEFENSE: "The Republican National Committee issued a press release criticizing the new Democratic chairman of the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee, Jeff Bingaman of New Mexico, as a 'big oil' man. The RNC cited Bingaman's campaign contributions from oil and gas interests and electric utilities."—Knight Ridder, June 7

WHEN SPIN FALLS APART: "Well, he's doing good. Well, not good. He's having a tough time."—Mike Lynch, chief of staff for California Representative Gary Condit (who has been the subject of intense speculation about whether he had an affair with a missing Washington intern), *The Hill* newspaper, June 13.


THAT ONE IS OF ME IN BRUSSELS, GESTURING WHILE TRANSLATING MY ENGLISH INTO LOUDER ENGLISH.
AND THAT'S ME MISTAKING THEIR FUNNY LITTLE CARS FOR BATTLEBOTS.
THERE I AM TRYING OUT MY THEORY THAT OUR MISSILE DEFENSE WILL PROTECT EVERYBODY FROM NUCLEAR ATTACK. THEY'RE SHAKING THEIR HEADS.
SO THEN I SAID MAYBE IT COULD ALSO PROTECT EVERYBODY FROM GLOBAL WARMING. THEY STOPPED SHAKING THEIR HEADS AND ARE JUST STARING AT ME.
SO I EXPLAINED IT AGAIN —IN LOUDER ENGLISH.
TOLES
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DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS: Due to an editing error, Martin Peretz's Cambridge Diarist "Excess" (June 18) mistakenly asserted that Yasir Arafat said the Palestinian Authority's cease-fire with Israel "applies only to Israel proper and not to the West Bank and Gaza." In fact, Arafat said the cease-fire applied only to territories under the Palestinian Authority's control, which represent part of the West Bank and Gaza Strip and none of Israel proper. ■

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White House Watch

Curriculum Veto

By Ryan Lizza

The Bush administration is under assault from its supposed allies, attacked as unilateralist by the political leaders it assumed would be on its side. Jacques Chirac, you say? Or Gerhard Schroeder? No, Republican Representative Charlie Norwood.

Back in February, Norwood, the Georgia dentist whose name has become the Good Housekeeping Seal of Approval for any HMO reform bill, agreed to forgo formal support of his own legislation in an attempt to forge a compromise with the White House. This week, after four months of futile negotiations, Norwood gave up. His staff made sure a "private" memo outlining the congressman's frustrations made its way to the press. The scathing letter, which ended up in *Roll Call*, noted that, "[a]fter working with our new White House and leadership since February, Charlie has been unable to reach any reasonable compromise on patients' rights. He has offered every possible concession on every provision, without a single reciprocation by the administration. The administration has not budged one inch from their position in February, which in essence would crush even existing patients' rights at the state level." On Wednesday, Norwood made the break official, calling a news conference in which he threw his weight behind the bill—sponsored by John McCain, John Edwards, and Ted Kennedy—that Tom Daschle is determined to pass in the Senate.

At the heart of Norwood's frustration is the question of liability. Bush wants all lawsuits against HMOs brought in federal courts (which generally impose smaller awards than state courts), and he wants to cap the damages plaintiffs can collect. Daschle, buoyed by polls showing the Democrats with a 15-point lead on the issue, insists he won't compromise.

Inside the White House, the person handling the policy negotiations is Josh Bolten, Bush's publicity-shy senior domestic policy aide. Bolten met with McCain on Capitol Hill last week and was scheduled to host a summit meeting at the White House on June 14 with all the major Senate players. "He's the highest-level guy at the White House who knows anything about this," says an aide to one of the senators involved in the negotiations. Assisting Bolten is Bush's health-policy coordinator, Anne Phelps, a former aide to Senator Bill Frist. But the person in charge of the administration's *political* strategy on HMO reform is Bush adviser Karl Rove. It was Rove who convinced Norwood to postpone sponsorship of the McCain bill in February and Rove who reeled Norwood back into the White House fold every time he was about to bolt—which happened "not over a dozen times," jokes a Norwood aide. Despite his myriad duties, Rove is so intimately involved in the debate over the patients' bill of rights that in early June, when a group of Texas doctors and legislators came to lobby the White House on the issue, they met not with mid-level staffers but with Rove himself. Even Department of Health and Human Services Secretary Tommy Thompson's staff is said to report to Rove. Rove's personal interest isn't surprising. The policy differences between Democrats and Republicans on the issue are minor, but the political implications are huge. The administration doesn't want to hand McCain a victory, but neither does it want to sign legislation that will enrich the trial lawyers who fill Democratic Party coffers. "That's what's driving this," says a White House aide, speaking of the trial lawyers.

The administration is mum on what its strategy will be, but so far its actions have tracked its approach to campaign finance reform, another piece of center-left legislation pushed onto the Senate calendar by McCain and the Democrats. If campaign finance is a guide, don't make too much of the White House's early hard line. Bush first outlined his own set of principles on campaign finance—hinting that he would veto anything that deviated from them. But when those principles didn't garner support, he tried to capture the political center by backing Senator Chuck Hagel's compromise bill. And now he seems willing to go well beyond that.

Similarly, Bush has released a set of HMO reform principles. He has promised to veto the Kennedy-McCain bill and has thrown his weight behind legislation sponsored by Bill Frist, John Breaux, and Jim Jeffords. That endorsement—like his endorsement of Hagel's bill on campaign finance—already represents a moderation of the White House line. The Frist-Breaux-Jeffords HMO bill is a far cry from the do-nothing approach that has dominated Republican thinking in recent years. But, just as Hagel's bill was voted down, Bush will probably have to compromise even more before the end of the day, because the Frist-Breaux-Jeffords legislation lacks much support. Look at whom the White House is counting on. Frist is not only the brother of the CEO of the most disreputable for-profit hospital chain in the country (HCA Healthcare); he also owns millions of dollars worth of stock in the company. Breaux seems willing to slap his name on any piece of GOP legislation that gets him a seat at the negotiating table. And Jeffords has been denounced by the White House itself as a "quirky" opportunist who can't be trusted. On Sunday, Bush Chief of Staff Andy Card reiterated the White House's threat to veto McCain-Kennedy. But he also indicated that Bush would sign campaign finance reform legislation, and the administration once implied it wouldn't sign that either.

Campaign finance isn't the only reason to believe Bush will ultimately swallow a real patients' bill of rights—there's also his record in Texas. The similarities between W.'s first few months as governor and his first few months as president are striking. In the summer of 1995 Bush had successfully passed the four pillars of his gubernatorial campaign—education, welfare, juvenile justice, and tort reform—when HMO reform, his first legislative challenge, was forced onto the agenda. This year Bush has passed his tax cut and is about to pass an education bill, and then

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Conversion of a Standardized Test Skeptic

Caroline M. Hoxby is a professor of economics, Harvard University; distinguished visiting fellow, Hoover Institution; and member, Hoover's Koret Task Force on K–12 Education.

Standardized testing plays an important role in reform, but it is not a silver bullet. A statewide testing program informs parents and legislators and exposes schools that are performing poorly. Unfortunately, most of the gain comes when the information is used not merely to inform debate but to give schools incentives to improve. Parents can create such incentives by exercising school choice informed by test results. Alternatively, a state can create a system of penalties or rewards for schools. School choice, however, is rare, and reward systems are hard to construct.

For years, I was a test skeptic because I thought that the benefits from testing (without accompanying incentives) were too small to justify the cost. I was wrong. Not only had I underestimated how much schools would improve to avoid being exposed, but I had not realized how inexpensive testing is. **Testing is undoubtedly the school reform with the highest ratio of benefits to costs.**

It costs about $2.50 per student to buy, grade, and publish a full battery of standardized tests, such as the Stanford 9 exams. California, for instance, is currently reimbursing districts at the rate of $2.52 per student for the cost of its testing program. Even if states were to pay proctors, the total cost would be under $4.50 per student. Just so that no one quibbles about a few cents here or there, let's round up to $5 per student for annual standardized testing. What else could we get for that amount?

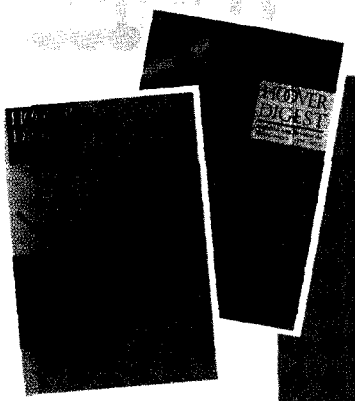
We could reduce class size by two-thousandths of a student. You could raise teacher salaries by 0.24 percent—about one-quarter of 1 percent. While incumbent teachers would not mind a raise, such a tiny increase will not draw talented people into teaching or retain a teacher with good outside job opportunities. You could keep students off the streets and involved in after-school activities for almost two hours *per year,* assuming that the activities are cheap. Although children need after-school supervision and stimulation, part of one afternoon will not help much.

You could lengthen the school year by one-tenth of one day, but will one-tenth of one day really make a difference? You could give every child a college scholarship that would pay for about 1.5 ten-thousandths of the cost of a typical American four-year college education ($32,000). To be fair, the child will be in twelve grades that use standardized tests before he reaches college, so you could add up the cost over those twelve years. The total would be a scholarship worth 1.8 one-thousandths of what a typical education costs.

Because the federal government accounts for about 7 percent of spending on elementary and secondary schools, it is often hard for federal policymakers to affect schools. As a rule, the federal government simply does not have enough money on the table to induce state and district officials to enact policies that they don't already want to enact. Testing, because it is so inexpensive, may be the exception to the rule. The current federal push for testing just may work.

— *Caroline M. Hoxby*

Paid for by the Hoover Institution, Stanford University.



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he'll be forced to tackle a patients' bill of rights.

In his autobiography, Bush recalls the advice he was given back in Texas: "I should sign it. If I didn't, I risked a huge backlash that could erode the goodwill I had earned during the first five months as governor of Texas." In the end, Bush vetoed the so-called Patient Protection Act, passed by the Texas legislature, and suffered exactly the sort of backlash he feared. Journalists called the veto the end of his honeymoon and his first major mistake. But after the veto he worked with his insurance commissioner to institute many of the provisions in the bill. In 1997, as he prepared for his reelection campaign, he signed a series of bills that codified these changes. Famously, he fought against and refused to sign a bill that gave Texas patients the right to sue their HMOs. But he allowed the measure to become law without his signature, and, during the presidential campaign, took full credit for it.

Bush's behavior in Texas suggests two important lessons. One is that, like any smart politician, Bush will take credit for things he opposed; he may well fight tooth and nail against an HMO reform bill in Congress and then turn around, late in the game, and claim it as his own. Second, Bush is on record as a champion of the Texas HMO laws—the same laws the Frist-Breaux-Jeffords bill would preempt. "It commits him to making sure that, whatever the final product is that lands on his desk, [it] doesn't blow up the Texas law," says one health care lobbyist. "He's caught in a trap of his own invention. It's like the dog that caught the car. Now he's got to drive it."

That points to an administration strategy of co-opting, not vetoing. Such a strategy would greatly disappoint many Democrats, who are looking to run on the issue for a third-straight election cycle and praying for Bush to veto anything that passes. "I think there are a lot of Democratic consultants and candidates out there who are probably lighting candles in church to that possibility," says a top Daschle aide. Which is exactly why the White House probably won't let it happen. ■

On the Hill

Right Angle

By MICHAEL CROWLEY

IT WAS A Tuesday night in late May, in the final, wearisome hours of the Senate tax cut debate. Faced with ultimate defeat on the tax bill, Senate Democrats were throwing up one symbolic amendment after another, forcing Republican tax-cutters to vote against saving money to protect Medicare and Social Security and to increase education spending. The scripts of 100 Democratic campaign commercials were written that night.

One senator keenly aware of the Democrats' strategy was Susan Collins of Maine, a moderate Republican up for reelection next year. Collins was not thrilled when GOP leaders picked her to speak against a Democratic amendment to trim the tax cut in order to increase Social Security benefits for the so-called notch babies, retirees born between 1917 and 1921 who insist that federal accounting quirks have cheated them out of bigger Social Security checks. The amendment's lead sponsor, Harry Reid of Nevada, gleefully warned that "[a] 'no' vote is a stab in the back of America's greatest generation."

On the Senate floor, Collins conceded that the amendment's Democratic sponsor had "raised an important issue," but she said the tax bill was the wrong place to deal with it and tepidly urged her colleagues to oppose the amendment "regardless of their views on the underlying issue." After the amendment's demise, however, Collins abandoned her decorum. According to a Democratic senator present, she stormed across the floor and confronted Senate Republican leader Trent Lott. "I can't believe you made me do that!" she seethed. "Now every notch baby in Maine is going to vote against me!" (A Collins spokesperson denies the exchange took place.)

Collins's tirade nicely illustrates the conventional wisdom about Lott in the wake of Vermont Senator Jim Jeffords's defection from the Republican Party: He's in trouble because he has tacked too far to the right, thus alienating Republican moderates. "[Lott] must be reassessing his heavy-handed tactics against G.O.P. moderates who question the party's harsh program," opined the *New York Times* editorial page regarding the Jeffords switch. The public seems to agree. In an early June ABC News/*Washington Post* poll, respondents described Democrats as "more open to the ideas of people who are political moderates" than Republicans by 57 percent to 32 percent. There's just one problem. While journalists and the public may think Lott has screwed up by being too conservative, most Republican senators actually think he's been too moderate. Like Newt Gingrich before him, Lott is in a Catch-22: viewed by the broader public as too partisan but seen by his own caucus as not partisan enough. In fact, if Lott is replaced as minority leader any time soon, it will probably be by someone more combative and hard-edged. Which means the Republicans may be in even worse shape than you think.

AMONG THE HANDFUL of names floated as possible successors to Lott, there are a couple of moderates. Certainly no senator has been more open about his potential interest in the job than Nebraska's Chuck Hagel. (Late last year Hagel casually told me that "quite a few" members had approached him about a possible leadership challenge.) But the very trait that makes Hagel a popular party spokesman—his McCain-like willingness to embrace campaign finance reform and to criticize GOP leaders—also makes him somewhat unpopular among his colleagues. Hagel's previous run at a leadership role, a 1998 challenge to Kentucky conservative Mitch McConnell for the chairmanship of the Republican Senatorial Campaign Committee, was a dismal failure. One Lott ally derides Hagel as "McCain lite" and "a smart aleck [who] doesn't have a lot of friends."

A second moderate whose name has been mentioned is Pete Domenici of New Mexico, a budget expert who has earned a reputation as a voice of reason on fiscal issues. Domenici flashed his leadership ambitions as recently as December, when he ran as a moderate alternative to Idaho's

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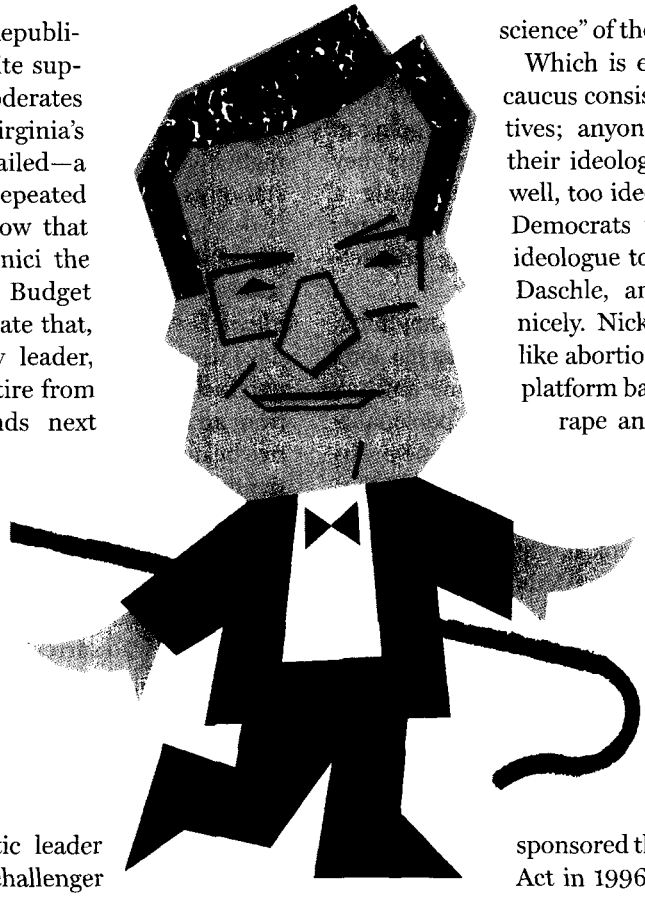
Larry Craig to head the Senate Republican Policy Committee. But, despite support from a combination of moderates and so-called "old bulls" like Virginia's John Warner, Domenici's bid failed—a result that would probably be repeated if he challenged Lott. Indeed, now that Jeffords's switch has cost Domenici the chairmanship of his beloved Budget Committee, many insiders speculate that, instead of running for minority leader, the 69-year-old Domenici will retire from the Senate when his term ends next year.



STEPHEN SAVAGE

Lott's real threat comes from the right. Though Lott took the job with a reputation as a firebrand, many of his conservative colleagues now view him as a narrow legislative mechanic who has failed to make a compelling case for the right's agenda and who has been consistently outfoxed by his rival, Democratic leader Tom Daschle. The most obvious challenger is Lott's deputy, Don Nickles of Oklahoma. Although a virtual unknown nationally, Nickles is prominent—and popular—within the GOP hierarchy. A devout Christian who worked his way through college as a janitor, Nickles was elected in 1980—at age 31—as the youngest-ever Republican senator. Hardworking and ambitious, the still-boyish Nickles gradually advanced under the tutelage of Bob Dole. Indeed, it was Nickles, not Lott, whom Dole hoped would succeed him when he left the Senate in 1996. But, despite Dole's blessing, Lott had more support, and Nickles instead opted for the number-two post, assistant majority leader. Nickles and Lott reportedly have an occasionally tense, jealousy-ridden relationship—a situation that presumably wasn't helped last month when Nickles was less than categorical in denying rumors that he would run against Lott to punish him for the party's loss of the Senate. Nor could it have escaped Lott's notice that, in January, Nickles told *The Sunday Oklahoman* that there was "a pretty good likelihood" that he would eventually run for leader.

Despite his reputation as a dim bulb in some quarters, Nickles is actually one of the Senate's more studious Republicans, a strong debater and effective floor tactician. Nickles was integral in stymieing Democratic attempts to pass a patients' bill of rights last year. And when he led the GOP filibuster against anti-tobacco legislation in 1998, he made liberals squirm by hammering the argument that new cigarette taxes would mainly impact the poor. "This guy is often underestimated," says one Democratic aide. "In fact, he does his homework, and he's very sharp, and when he puts his mind to it on the floor he can be devastatingly effective." Moreover, unlike Lott, Nickles is a disciple of conservative theory. One GOP aide gushes that he is the "ideological conscience" of the caucus.

Which is exactly the problem. The GOP caucus consists mostly of bedrock conservatives; anyone who could be described as their ideological conscience is likely to be, well, too ideological for the broader public. Democrats would love to have a fervent ideologue to contrast with the soft-spoken Daschle, and Nickles would fit the bill nicely. Nickles is a zealot on "life" issues like abortion (in 1992 he fought for a GOP platform banning abortion even in cases of rape and incest) and assisted suicide, a practice he has tried hard to outlaw in Oregon. An across-the-board culture warrior, he's pushed for the posting of the Ten Commandments in schools, battled the National Endowment for the Arts, led the fights against Surgeon General nominees Henry Foster and Joycelyn Elders, and sponsored the anti-gay Defense of Marriage Act in 1996. (Asked in 1992 whether gays should be allowed in the Republican Party, he initially answered that the question was "a tough one," before he allowed that it was probably OK.) One former GOP aide says that, while Nickles strongly advocated conservative principles in strategy meetings, he wasn't very good at identifying how those principles could be realized. "It was not very constructive," he says.

Nickles will likely wait until after the 2002 election to make any moves. At that point, the Senate GOP's leadership term limits will force him from his post—he'll need to find another leadership position or join the rank and file. If he doesn't retire, it's not hard to guess which path he'll choose.

ANOTHER SENATOR WHOSE name is sometimes circulated is Larry Craig, the conservative who beat Domenici for the policy job. In the hours before a Republican caucus meeting to discuss the Jeffords defection, a rumor whipped around the Capitol that Craig might try to topple Lott. Craig quickly shot it down—which is probably a good thing for the Republican Party. Whereas Nickles might unsettle some voters with his Christian-right fervor, Craig is identified with an even less popular strand of contemporary conservatism: anti-environmental radicalism. He supports significant logging increases in national forests, and he views the Endangered Species Act with hostility. He's also a board member of the National Rifle Association. As one Democratic aide puts it: "It wouldn't take many interviews with Craig on the weekend shows to convince people that Congress was being led by someone pretty far out of the mainstream."

Indeed, it's hard to think of anyone who has more visibly failed to learn from the Jeffords fiasco than Craig. In a

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post-defection interview with *The Washington Times*, Craig labeled Republican moderates "weak sisters" and derided talk of softening the GOP agenda: "[I]n the end the conservative majority has the right to expect its will is going to be carried out." While other Republicans were insisting they held no grudge against their Vermont colleague, Craig, a member of the singing quartet of senators to which Jeffords also belonged, icily declared that he "will not sing with Jeffords again."

Other conservative names in circulation are, if anything, even harder to take seriously. Phil Gramm of Texas has long aspired to bigger things and is admired by some anti-tax conservatives—but he is also one of the least personable politicians on the national stage (as his disastrous 1996 presidential bid aptly demonstrated). Republican Conference Chairman Rick Santorum of Pennsylvania, a militant agitator with a cocky, college-Republican look, is often described as an up-and-comer. But he can be shrillness defined, and, at 43, he is still considered young and relatively inexperienced. Ditto for Tennessee's Bill Frist, a 49-year-old doctor in his second term who now runs the party's Senate campaign committee. "Frist has got to prove himself in his current leadership job," says the former Senate aide. "The same goes for Santorum."

Ultimately, the lack of plausible alternatives means Lott will likely remain minority leader through the midterm elections. If the Republicans manage to retake the Senate then, he may well hold onto his job. But if he presides over further GOP losses, as seems increasingly likely, he'll probably be deposed in favor of a more conservative alternative. Which means Nickles, Craig, or even Frist has a reasonable shot at one day being minority leader of the U.S. Senate. What they'll almost certainly never be is majority leader. ■

Caracas Dispatch

Hugocentric

By Anna Husarska

In Hugo Chávez's Venezuela, you never know whether to laugh or cry. Consider the sequence of events surrounding *El Pantaletazo*—"The G-String Revolt." Last January, someone anonymously mailed ladies' undergarments to 140 top officials of the Venezuelan military, implying that they were not macho enough to overthrow their erratic and increasingly authoritarian president. The mailings led to the unforgettable sight of Chávez's minister of defense angrily waving the lingerie at a press conference designed to squelch further criticism of the government. But his performance backfired—the press conference has become the inspiration for Venezuela's hottest new play, *El Pantaletazo*. The comedy features actors reenacting the press conference and several public appearances by Chávez himself, especially his notorious call-in radio program, "Aló Presidente." And the playwright didn't even have to think up original lines—for the most part, the script borrows word for word from actual Chávez pronouncements.

Suffer through one of those speeches, and you understand why they make for such fertile material. Around 10:30 one night on my recent visit to Venezuela, all eleven national TV stations interrupted their regular programs to broadcast a two-hour Chávez address popularly dubbed "From Tehran with Love." Taped in Iran, where Chávez was visiting, the address saw the president sing the Venezuelan tune "*Y si algún día tengo que naufragar*" (which means either "If one day I were to be shipwrecked" or "If one day I were to fail"). It also included a geography lesson, in which Chávez, working from an old map that featured the USSR, compared the relative beauty of different continents' shapes. For a moment in the middle of the lesson, Chávez turned serious and somewhat menacing, warning that his opponents were "taking advantage of my absence to sow disquiet" and threatening the "*señores de los media*" that, even abroad, because he has access to the Internet, "I am watching you." But then he lapsed back into surreality, telling his countrymen that they shouldn't despair because "[w]e fly like an eagle, a serpent cannot eat us." He concluded with "*salaam aleikum*."

Chávez likes to travel. Last year's itinerary featured fellow oil-producing rogue states Libya and Iraq. This year he's taken a three-week tour that included Russia, India, China, Bangladesh, Malaysia, Indonesia, and, of course, Iran. In all, he's made 89 foreign visits since taking power in early 1999, traveling to Cuba four times. The popular afternoon tabloid *TalCual* suggests the president's most recent itinerary may be inspired by his reading of Jules Verne.

But Chávez manages to combine global pretensions with a Clintonesque interest in the minutiae of his constituents' lives—so much so that his mentor, Fidel Castro, publicly warned him not to try to be Venezuela's mayor. And the warning is apt: In his televised call-ins, the president dispenses not only political opinion but also "Dear Abby"-style personal advice. On April 19, in Bolivar Square, I saw a small crowd of admirers (many dressed in Chávez's trademark red beret) rush to try to hand the president their *papelitos*. They were chomping at the bit—like Monica behind a rope line—hoping for their moment with Chávez. But unlike in the United States, where fans simply shake the president's hand or briefly exchange words, the Venezuelans were there to hand Chávez (or, at least, his bodyguards) their "wish letters." A journalist friend says there are myriad tales of Chávez solving individuals' problems with pensions, water, or donkeys—like some miracle-inducing shrine. "*El problema* are the people around him," one woman in the crowd told me. "He himself is a saint."

Chávez is clearly charismatic. But he is also, in the words of *TalCual* editor and former planning minister Teodoro Petkoff, "authoritarian, aggressive and intolerant." Indeed, Chávez has already dismantled many of the institutional checks on his power. He has rewritten Venezuela's constitution, making the president's term one year longer, allowing for presidential reelection (previously Venezuelan leaders could serve only one term), abolishing the Senate, replacing

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the Supreme Court with a much less independent Supreme Justice Tribunal, and even changing his country's name to the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela. Chávez has also held a national referendum that successfully dissolved the leadership of the country's largest trade union. And he has even gone after the Catholic Church—launching the idea of a Venezuelan Interreligious Parliament with the authority to regulate all the nation's religious organizations. "There is a grave question," the Venezuelan Catholic Church recently asked, "whether the democratic state of law exists and is in effect."

The good news is that with Chávez's formal opposition (the two traditional parties, Acción Democrática and COPEI) having largely disappeared, civil society is developing into a kind of opposition of its own. Neighborhood committees, self-defense organizations, parents' associations, and other independent groups are all thriving—despite government efforts to deny them international funding and thus stifle their work. Nongovernmental organizations such as Primero Justicia (Justice First) are becoming political parties, and private school parents' associations are staging street protests against Chávez's new education law and joining forces with angry petroleum workers striking for a raise. A sweetheart deal between Chávez and Castro—in which Cuba has sent 178 doctors and 323 sports trainers to Venezuela and will receive 53,000 barrels of Venezuelan crude oil daily, sold on very favorable terms—provoked a rally on May 26 in front of the Cuban Embassy in Caracas. Venezuela's traditionally apolitical country-club set chanted "no" to *Cubanización*. Decked out in designer glasses, golden chains, cell phones, boutique scarves, and French perfume, the protesters made a rather comic tableau. But in Hugo Chávez's Venezuela, never underestimate the political power of the absurd. ■

John Sweeney in trouble.

Labor's Love Lost

By JOHN B. JUDIS

POLITICALLY, THINGS ARE looking up for the AFL-CIO. With the Senate in Democratic hands, the federation has a good chance of blocking any new White House assaults on labor. And, last November's election notwithstanding, John Sweeney and AFL-CIO Political Director Steve Rosenthal have turned the federation into the most formidable organization in American politics.

But the most important mission Sweeney set for himself when he became president of the AFL-CIO in 1995 wasn't political influence; it was organizing workers. And, six years later, the AFL-CIO continues to hemorrhage members. What's more, this year it suffered the kind of loss it has not endured for more than three decades: the disaffiliation of a major union, the 500,000-member United Brotherhood of Carpenters. In his acceptance speech in October 1995, Sweeney said, "As your president, I will never forget that our movement grows by addition and multiplication, not by division and subtraction." But, sadly, "division and subtraction" is exactly what's going on.

UNDER SWEENEY'S PREDECESSOR, Lane Kirkland, union membership, which peaked at 32.5 percent of the American workforce in 1953, fell to 14.9 percent by 1995. But under Sweeney it has fallen at an even faster rate than it did during Kirkland's last five years—to 13.5 percent today. AFL-CIO officials insist percentage figures don't matter because union density always falls when the workforce increases rapidly, as it did in the 1990s. But the absolute numbers are equally sobering: In the last five years, the number of private-sector union workers fell by 252,000—despite a tight labor market (which favors organizing) and a Democratic administration enforcing labor laws. Even factoring in gains by public-sector unions, overall federation membership has dropped by 68,000 in the last five years. A decline of this magnitude is disastrous because labor's ability to organize new factories and offices is directly proportional to union density: If three of four plants in an area are organized (thus providing those workers better wages and benefits), it is not hard to convince workers at the unorganized plant to vote for a union. But if none are, workers are more likely to heed management's warnings that joining a union would make it impossible for their plant to compete. Apply this logic to entire industries (e.g., insurance) and entire regions (e.g., the South), and you have the dilemma facing today's labor movement.

The AFL-CIO's declining membership is largely the result of systematic factors—the shift from manufacturing to services and from large factories to small offices—and would probably have occurred regardless of what Sweeney did. Besides, organizing is primarily the responsibility of individual unions rather than of the AFL-CIO. But Sweeney won office on a promise to mobilize unions to reverse the decline in membership, and he took immediate steps to do so. Unfortunately, they didn't work.

First, Sweeney tried to use his AFL-CIO bully pulpit to pressure individual unions to spend more on organizing. At the time, most of them devoted as little as 5 percent of their overall budgets to organizing new members, concentrating instead on servicing existing ones. Sweeney said the unions should instead follow the example of his own Service Employees International Union (SEIU) and devote at least 30 percent of their budgets to organizing. Sweeney also beefed up the organizing budget of the AFL-CIO itself and put it under the leadership of Richard Bensinger, a former textile organizer who, in 1989, founded the highly regarded Organizing Institute.

A few of the institute's initiatives—such as Union Summer, which trained college students to be labor organizers—succeeded. But others fell far short. Sweeney and Bensinger failed to get most unions to raise their organizing budgets to

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30 percent. Although the unions themselves don't release figures, it's a good bet that only the SEIU, the Hotel Employees and Restaurant Employees, and the Carpenters spend 30 percent or more on organizing. And while a few other unions—the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees, the Communications Workers of America, the United Steelworkers of America, and the Union of Needletrades, Industrial and Textile Employees (UNITE)—have also increased their organizing budgets, taken together they make up only a fraction of the federation's 64 unions.

Sweeney and Bensinger's biggest efforts to boost union membership were two major organizing drives—one among the approximately 20,000 strawberry workers around Watsonville, California, and the other among construction workers in Las Vegas. Both flopped. Beginning in 1996 the AFL-CIO spent as much as $90,000 per month trying to help the United Farm Workers organize the Watsonville strawberry pickers. They sent in organizers, set up support groups like the National Strawberry Commission for Workers' Rights, and recruited civil rights, feminist, and environmentalist leaders, including Marian Wright Edelman and Ethel Kennedy, to buttress the union's case. But, three years later, the workers rejected the AFL-CIO in favor of a poorly funded, loosely organized rival union that was friendly to the company and capitalized on the workers' hostility to outside organizers. Five years later, the AFL-CIO can claim only 750 new strawberry pickers as recruits out of roughly 20,000.

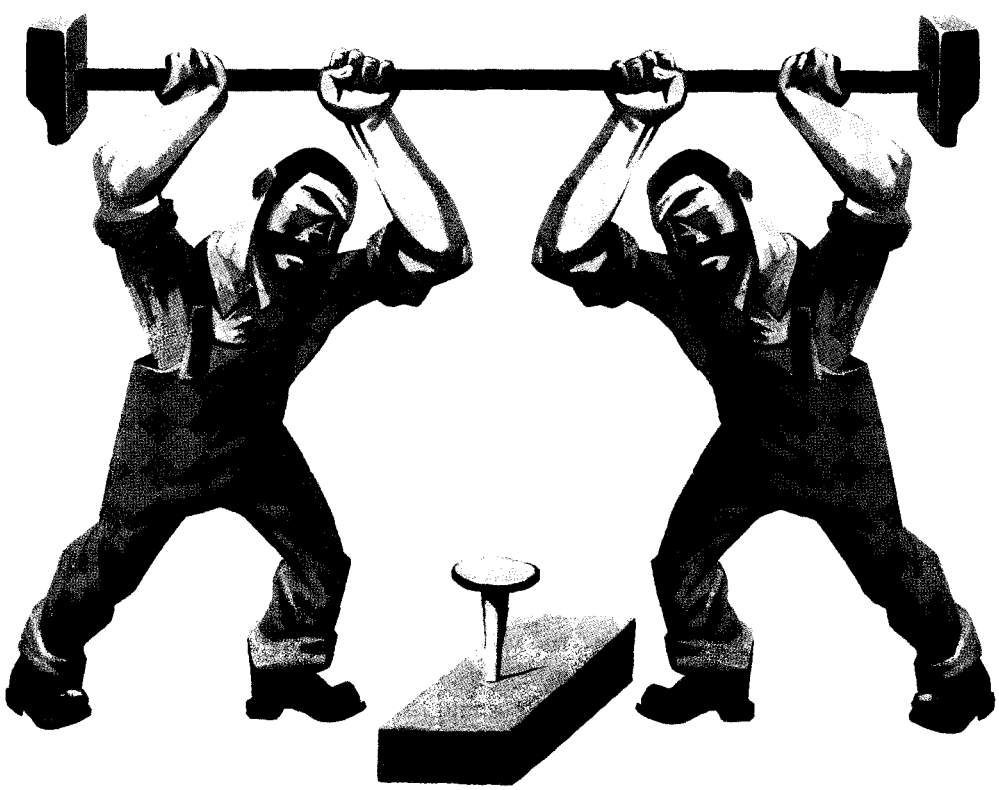
The Las Vegas effort fared little better. In 1996 the federation spent $1.2 million establishing a Building Trades Organizing Project to organize 60,000 construction workers in booming Las Vegas. Individual unions chipped in another $4 million. Robert Georgine, president of the AFL-CIO's Building and Construction Trades Department, called it "the largest organizing campaign ever to be launched in the labor movement." But, three years later, the Organizing Project folded. One former Building Trades official who worked in Las Vegas said, "This project spent an awful lot of money, had very little accountability, and didn't achieve its stated goals, and was sort of liquidated with no serious discussion of what went wrong. There was no effort to learn from the experience. There was a structural problem with those kinds of campaigns. It was unclear who was in charge."

In June 1998 Sweeney fired Bensinger without a public explanation. At the time, one of Sweeney's closest associates told me Bensinger wasn't "getting the job done. Last year we brought in 400,000 new members, and we continued to decline. You can't take that on the chin. You have to do something to change." But Bensinger and his allies in the labor movement tell a different story. He had run afoul, they say, of Sweeney's inner circle of former SEIU aides—criticizing, for example, Communications Director Denise Mitchell's $10 million p.r. effort to "reposition" the labor movement in the media.

In Bensinger's place, Sweeney appointed one former SEIU staffer and then, when he left after two years, another. "When Bensinger left, they lost their ideological direction," says a manufacturing union official. "There is now a lot of turmoil over there." Even AFL-CIO officials admit they no longer know what to do with the organizing department. "The fact that organizing hasn't grown at the pace we wanted to grow [has caused us to] do a lot of introspection," one of Sweeney's inner circle acknowledged.

THE AFL-CIO'S FAILURE to stem the decline in union rolls has been compounded by other kinds of subtraction. While the federation has convinced some smaller independent workers' groups to join (e.g., the labor arm of the American Nurses Association), it has failed to win over the 2.6 million member National Education Association, whose members balked at a merger with the American Federation of Teachers partly because they didn't want to belong to the AFL-CIO. A planned merger among the Machinists, the Steelworkers, and the United Auto Workers also fizzled, perhaps contributing to the UAW's decision to follow the Teamsters in distancing themselves from federation affairs. Worse, the federation has lost two important unions altogether.

First to leave was the United Transportation Union, which



THOMAS FUCHS

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represents about 125,000 rail workers. The UTU quit following a failed merger with the smaller, but more stable, Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers. When the BLE's members balked, the UTU began trying to raid BLE locals, in violation of the AFL-CIO constitution. When the federation's executive council levied fines on the UTU, it quit.

Second, and much more significant, was the exit of the United Brotherhood of Carpenters. The Carpenters, including workers who build bridges as well as homes, are the largest building-trades union, often accounting for 60 percent of the workers on a given construction site. Their departure seriously damaged the federation, not only because of their union's size but because of the ostensible grounds on which they quit—namely that, for all Sweeney's talk about organizing, the AFL-CIO still wasn't serious about increasing membership.

Like other construction unions, the Carpenters had suffered a sharp decline in membership during the '80s and early '90s—from 609,000 in 1981 to 349,000 in 1995. But, that year, 40-year-old Douglas McCarron, who had made his reputation organizing Mexican-American construction workers in Southern California, was elected president of the union and immediately attempted to reorient it toward organizing. Convinced the union was wasting time and money on lobbying and p.r., McCarron slashed its Washington staff from 240 to 25 and leased out most of its D.C. headquarters. He also removed control over organizing from the locals (which were, typically, more interested in servicing their members) and placed it in regional councils. He made organizing 50 percent of the union's budget, and, after Sweeney fired Bensinger, McCarron hired him as a consultant. McCarron's initiatives sparked a revolt by locals—but they also brought in new members. While estimates vary, the Carpenters have reversed their long-term decline and now boast somewhere between 425,000 and 525,000 members. "They are making a commitment to organizing that is not being matched by other building trades," says one AFL-CIO state director.

ONE MIGHT THINK this common commitment to organizing would have made Sweeney's AFL-CIO and McCarron's Carpenters natural allies. But McCarron's history of hostility toward the federation predated his presidency. "McCarron has always seen the per capita to the AFL-CIO as a waste of money," says one former Carpenters staff member. "Give him the money, and he would do more useful things with it." McCarron wanted the federation to devote most of its budget to organizing, and, when he became union president, he vented his dissatisfaction with what he derisively termed the "Washington bureaucracy" at the federation's 16th Street headquarters. Soon, without making any specific demands, he began withholding the Carpenters' dues to the AFL-CIO. The numbers are disputed, but by early 2000 the Carpenters owed the AFL-CIO at least several million dollars. To prevent a rupture, Sweeney proposed a deal whereby the Carpenters' debts would be forgiven if they began paying progressively more dues on their membership each month. But other union presidents nixed the deal at the AFL-CIO's executive council meeting in February 2000. After obtaining approval from his convention and executive board, McCarron withdrew the Carpenters from the federation this March, stating in a letter to union membership: "It's a matter of principle. It now costs $4 million a year of your dues money to belong to that association.... The AFL-CIO and many affiliated unions, including some of the other trades, have talked about change, but made few real changes. For example, while we were cutting staff and putting our resources in the field, spending on headquarters staff at the AFL-CIO alone almost doubled." (According to the AFL-CIO, the number of staff rose a little over 10 percent.)

The Carpenters' departure deprives the AFL-CIO of $4 million per year just as it faces a budget crisis. Their departure "couldn't come at a worse time," says Tim Nesbitt, the president of the Oregon AFL-CIO. But, most importantly, it could lead to a disastrous struggle for members between other construction unions and the Carpenters, who are no longer constrained by the AFL-CIO constitution from raiding competing locals.

MOST UNION OFFICIALS and activists have been harshly critical of McCarron's decision to leave the federation—noting that McCarron never aired his grievances or made proposals for specific change at the AFL-CIO executive council meetings. But some officials I spoke to—none of whom was willing to be quoted by name—seconded his general complaints. "There is a growing concern over how the national spends money that goes beyond McCarron," says an official from a service-sector union. Adds another, from manufacturing: "The president of the Carpenters is as loony as the day is long.... Having said that, he clearly hit on some issues that are very important." Such talk seems to have shaken Sweeney. At the last executive council meeting, he made an unprecedented hour-long PowerPoint presentation on the federation's budget, and further budget discussion is on the agenda for the next meeting, in August. Talk is rife at the AFL-CIO about how to revive "politics and organizing." And Sweeney is determined to get the Carpenters back into the fold by the AFL-CIO convention this December. "As much as we'd like the tell the truth about Doug, we have to play the good guy," says one close Sweeney associate. "We'll get them back in, and we'll probably kiss their ass."

At the December convention, Sweeney will probably be reelected without opposition to a four-year term. Union officials appreciate his accessibility—a sharp contrast with the remote Kirkland—and his tireless devotion to the job. But even bringing the Carpenters back won't quell mounting internal doubts about the federation's ability to reverse the labor movement's decline. "If you are doing a report card on John Sweeney," says one staff member at a manufacturing union, "he ran on a couple of key planks. One was increasing organizing throughout the federation, and that hasn't happened. Another was helping with affiliations and mergers, and that hasn't happened. And another was to keep the House of Labor together, and that hasn't happened. The political action has been a shining star, but on everything else

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he has failed to deliver."

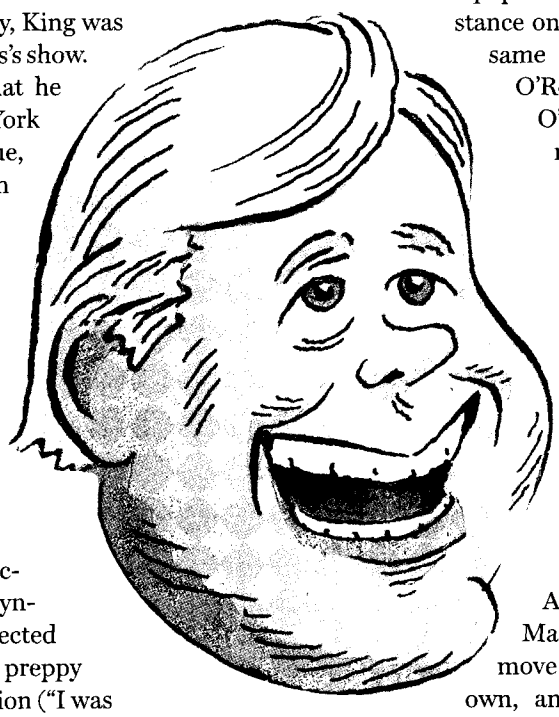
Still, for all the criticism of Sweeney's failure to organize more effectively, there's no consensus on what should be done differently. Some officials, echoing McCarron, want the AFL-CIO to spend almost all its resources on organizing, abandoning its public relations, coalition-building, and lobbying campaigns. Others believe individual unions must be responsible for their own organizing and want the AFL-CIO organizing department shut down altogether. And, indeed, if Sweeney has failed to deliver on his stated goals, he has been hampered most by his member unions' refusal to meet his 30 percent budget organizing goal. (According to an SEIU official, a delegation of union presidents recently complained to SEIU President Andy Stern that he was pressing them too aggressively to meet Sweeney's target.) Add this resistance to employer hostility, demographic changes, and weak labor laws, and you have an environment that would probably have stymied even such labor giants as John L. Lewis or Walter Reuther. And, for the foreseeable future, it's likely to stymie John Sweeney. ■

Chris Matthews and Bill O'Reilly v. the working man.

Class Act

By NOAM SCHEIBER

NEW YORK REPRESENTATIVE Peter King likes to tell a story about his friend, the cable-television talk-show host Chris Matthews. Last May, King was a guest on Matthews's show. Rudy Giuliani had just hinted that he was about to drop out of the New York Senate race, and King's colleague, Rick Lazio, was preparing to step in as his replacement. King, who had once eyed the nomination himself, wasn't especially keen on the upstart from Long Island. But Matthews was even more dismissive. At one point in their banter, Matthews briefly sized up Lazio's chances: "[He said] he knew Lazio was going to lose the first day he wore that prep school outfit," King recalls.



When I ask him about the anecdote, Matthews disputes both the syntax ("I said, 'You don't get elected senator with khakis on.' Not preppy clothes—khakis") and the implication ("I was just saying the guy's got to grow up. He's running in the New York Senate race; the guy should put a suit on"). But then Matthews betrays himself. Before we can move on, he insists, with his trademark manic laugh: "I don't have any class resentment. Why? Because [Lazio] went to Vassar? You know, give me a break.... My son wanted to go there till we straightened him out."

The episode is standard fare for anyone familiar with Matthews's show. In the course of a typical hour of "Hardball," which he hosts five nights per week on CNBC, Matthews denigrates Ivy League elitists, scolds politicians who forget they serve real working people, and bristles at the suggestion that anyone is entitled to public office. It's an appealing shtick—so appealing, in fact, that Matthews's brand of class-based populism is becoming the reigning ideological stance on the political talk-show circuit. In the same nightly time slot, Fox News's Bill O'Reilly strikes a similar note on "The O'Reilly Factor," now cable's top-rated news show. This winter, MSNBC hired regular "Hardball" guest Mike Barnicle to carry on the tradition two hours before Matthews. And, though he editorializes less, you can even detect a similar tone in Tim Russert's weekly inquisitions on NBC's "Meet the Press."

There's a lot to be said for Matthews's and O'Reilly's populism. It implicitly justifies aggressive questioning, which provokes more revealing answers than the deferential style of, say, "Face the Nation." And when politicians evade a question, Matthews and O'Reilly don't meekly move on; they jump in with answers of their own, answers that are blunt, entertaining, sometimes infuriating, and—in Matthews's case, at least—informed by an impressive grasp of American political history.

But there's something odd about the Matthews-O'Reilly worldview: For them, the term "working class"—the group both men consider their primary constituency—is defined not by income but by cultural values such as hard work, devotion to family, and respect for authority and tradition. And these value questions do explain a lot about American politics: why Bill and Hillary Clinton aroused so much hostility, why Al Gore fared poorly among blue-collar men, why Americans resented welfare. What they don't explain is why

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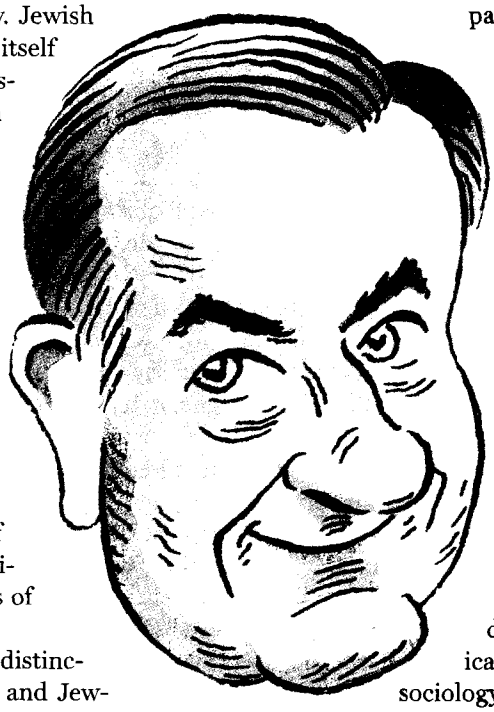
Democrats ever win. If working-class Americans have distinct cultural preferences that lean to the right, they also have distinct economic preferences that lean to the left. And it's these working-class economic interests that Matthews and O'Reilly—despite their in-your-face populism—generally ignore.

MATTHEWS AND O'REILLY are in some senses heirs to—and in some senses rebels against—a political tradition that has maintained at least a subterranean presence in the United States for 100 years. It is largely a white-ethnic, Catholic tradition—forged in turn-of-the-century immigrant neighborhoods that responded to the neglect and disdain of nativist Protestant elites by building their own churches, labor unions, and political machines. The tradition of Fiorello LaGuardia and Tip O'Neill, it is also the tradition of Richard Nixon's silent majority, the Reagan Democrats, and, to some degree, Pat Buchanan. Its defining feature isn't populism, which also plays a role in Protestant and Jewish American political traditions. Its defining feature is its emphasis on solidarity. Protestant populism—think of the Christian right—also reveres tradition and resents cultural elites, but it is more individualistic and less suspicious of profit as a motivating force in society. Jewish populism has traditionally manifested itself as socialism or social democracy, focusing on economic issues to the exclusion of cultural ones. Only the Catholic tradition has historically emphasized solidarity as a value in both economic and cultural spheres. Thus it was that, in the 1930s, Catholic journals like *Commonweal* and *America* denounced "government by plutocracy" and lamented an income distribution that left "so many [as] owners of nothing," while the powerful Cardinal Dennis Dougherty of Philadelphia railed against Hollywood's exploitation of "sex and crime" as a "vicious and insidious attack ... on the very foundations of our Christian civilization."



ROBERT GROSSMAN (2)

While assimilation has dulled the distinctions among the Catholic, Protestant, and Jewish political traditions, those boundaries were still quite clear in the world of Matthews's and O'Reilly's youth. Like the vast majority of children after World War II living in neighborhoods with large Catholic populations, both attended parochial schools from elementary school through high school—Matthews graduated from LaSalle College High School just outside Philadelphia in 1963; O'Reilly, from Chaminade High School in Long Island in 1967. And unlike contemporary parochial schools, which educate a significant number of non-Catholics, in O'Reilly and Matthews's day there was almost no religious diversity. Asked what percentage of his classmates were Catholic, O'Reilly says, "Everybody." Matthews responds: "One hundred percent."

Like most Catholics in the 1950s, the two families attended Mass regularly—Matthews's family at St. Christopher's in the Northeastern Philadelphia neighborhood of Somerton, where he was an altar boy, and O'Reilly's family at St. Brigid's in Westbury, New York. And the local parish had more than just religious significance: In his book *American Catholic*, Charles Morris describes how, even in the suburbs, "Catholics still instinctively looked to the parish as a social center." As John Blasi, a childhood friend of O'Reilly's, recalls, "You tended to [associate] with guys you'd know from school. You'd see them at Mass.... Your families would socialize. It wouldn't necessarily be church-affiliated, [but] it was people with common backgrounds."

To some degree, Catholics kept to themselves in the postwar years for the same reason Jews, blacks, Hispanics, and everyone else did: America was a more segregated, less multicultural, less tolerant place. But there were also specific forces driving Catholic insularity. First, the Church's decision to bolster its system of parochial education in the '20s and '30s—a response to both creeping secularism and widespread anti-Catholic discrimination—kept many Catholic children out of public schools. Second, many Catholics interpreted Al Smith's crushing defeat in the 1928 presidential election as a rejection of Catholic participation in American public life.

The result was what Morris calls a "remarkable emotional withdrawal from secular America" that lasted until John F. Kennedy's presidential victory in 1960. Beginning in the '20s, Catholics began erecting a sort of parallel civil society. Catholic magazines, radio programs, and book clubs proliferated. Catholic professional associations emerged to hand down ethical guidelines—bar associations weighed in on how Catholic lawyers should handle divorce cases; medical associations gave advice on how Catholic doctors should comport themselves in secular hospitals. Academics cultivated distinctly Catholic versions of disciplines such as history (via the American Catholic Historical Association) and sociology (through the American Catholic Sociological Society). The Knights of Columbus served as a network for Catholic businessmen; the Association of Catholic Trade Unionists emerged to protect Catholic labor interests.

AS WITH PRE-CIVIL-RIGHTS blacks, Catholic ethnic segregation enforced a measure of economic integration: Doctors, teachers, and factory workers lived in the same neighborhoods. Thus, for postwar suburban Catholics like O'Reilly and Matthews, class had not only economic connotations but social and cultural ones as well. "Working-

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class" didn't just mean someone who worked a blue-collar job but also someone who went to church regularly, paid his bills on time, and drank American beer—regardless of what he happened to do for a living.

Yet by the mid-'60s, median income and education levels for Catholics had met or exceeded those of the nation as a whole. And, as American Catholics grew more affluent in the postwar years, the sense of cultural solidarity began to overshadow economic solidarity, at least for the more prosperous. In his book *Parish Boundaries*, John McGreevy describes how Connecticut priests in the mid-'60s found it increasingly difficult to fill seats at meetings devoted to labor issues, complaining that their parishioners were preoccupied with vacations and televisions.

WHICH HELPS EXPLAIN why O'Reilly—who grew up in a Long Island Levittown and whose college-educated father worked as an accountant—calls his background working-class. O'Reilly's recent, semiautobiographical book, *The O'Reilly Factor*, dwells at length on issues of class but conceives of them almost entirely in social terms. In one particularly blunt reminiscence about his undergraduate days at Marist College, O'Reilly describes how "Vassar ... was nearby, but ... [t]he Ivy Leaguers up from Princeton or down from Cornell got the dates; we were treated like hired help." Matthews has expressed similar feelings. Though he admits he didn't grow up poor, he exhibits a certain disdain for the country-club set. "My wife grew up a little better off," he discloses. And then, only half-joking: "She went to a private, Catholic, rich-girl school, with Patty Hearst and that crowd."

Politically, one might have thought Matthews's and O'Reilly's resentment of WASP social snobbery would have pushed them to the left. But in the '60s the Ivy League elite that O'Reilly so resented was rapidly moving left itself—leading him and many of his peers to associate its social snobbery with its cultural libertinism. In the '60s and '70s Catholic colleges were havens for traditional values, a far cry from the radicalism of U.C. Berkeley, the University of Wisconsin, and the Ivy League. While their counterparts were burning bras and flags, Matthews's classmates at Holy Cross were "much more respectful of authority." "The anti-American thing, where you actually burned a flag and cheered Ho Chi Minh, was alien to me," he recalls. Similarly, O'Reilly remembers that, at Marist, "there were a lot of conservative kids who didn't buy into that 'Let's overthrow everything' idea." Students were also conservative in their attitudes toward religion. According to the Catholic academic Father Andrew Greeley, whose book *Religion and Career* analyzed 1961 college graduates, Catholic students stood apart from their peers because of "their church attendance and their valuation of religion as a source of life satisfaction." All of which led people like Matthews and O'Reilly to take a rather dim view of their more bohemian peers. Says King of Matthews: "He sees boomers as much more self-centered [than the previous generation]. That generation does not have definite principles. It's much more egocentric."

Whis is not to say the traditional Catholic emphasis on economic justice has died. It persists in the Church itself, which has bitterly and eloquently denounced the gap between rich and poor. And despite Catholics' increased willingness to vote Republican in recent decades, it also defines the politics of numerous Catholic politicians, particularly those with working-class constituencies. From Tip O'Neill to Joe Moakley to David Bonior, many Catholic politicians have subordinated conservative cultural instincts to a left-leaning economic agenda they believed was more integral to the Catholic tradition.

But Matthews and O'Reilly have largely done the opposite, retaining the language of Catholic class consciousness while divesting it of economic meaning. Both men claim working stiffs as their natural constituents—"people who basically are not entrepreneurial ... [who] get to work on time and work hard and take care of their family," according to Matthews; in O'Reilly's words, they're the "80 percent of [Americans] ... who get up in the morning and try to do the best they can for not a lot of money." But despite the allusions to class, the economic content of these statements is negligible. Instead, the emphasis is on values: getting to work on time, working hard, taking care of your family. (With the nation's eightieth income percentile for families at around $90,000, it's tough to pity those earning O'Reilly's definition of "not a lot of money.")

THE TENDENCY TO see working-class interests entirely through the prism of values is a recurring theme on both shows. Matthews's main beef with Bill Clinton's health care plan wasn't so much its substance as its failure to distinguish between those who deserved health care and those who didn't. "He didn't say 'for people who work hard and play by the rules,'" Matthews told a guest in 1999. "He said, 'I'm gonna give it to everybody, and you're going to thank me for it.' That's socialist, old Democrat." O'Reilly regularly defends the interests of "working Americans" against the encroachments of the immoral poor ("What do the citizens who go to work every day owe people who are ill-educated and irresponsible?") and the homeless ("[Y]ou're almost insulting working Americans ... [i]f these people are not willing to go out and sell candy for ten hours a week to help [pay for their] shelter"). But rarely against the selfish rich: "If you die tomorrow," O'Reilly lectured one wealthy opponent of the estate tax, "the government's going to come in and take a fairly substantial piece of whatever you leave your heirs. And you don't have any problem with that?"

Occasionally, Matthews's and O'Reilly's class consciousness even leads to comic misunderstandings, as during a 1999 exchange between O'Reilly and Kevin Keating of the "Yuppie Eradication Project." Keating said he was organizing residents of San Francisco's Mission District in opposition to the neighborhood's rapid gentrification, which was driving up property values and, consequently, rents paid by the neighborhood's working-class residents. O'Reilly was sympathetic: "I understand what you're saying. My father was raised in Brooklyn, and they did the same thing in his neighborhood." So far, so good. But as Keating began to

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describe his group's tactics—explaining at one point that "[s]abotage has always played a vital role in working-class response to life under capitalism"—O'Reilly grew apoplectic: "Opposition to capitalism. Now you sound like . . . you're a Communist. Are you?" Scorn yuppies culturally, and you have good values; scorn them economically, and you're a dangerous radical.

AND SCORNING POLITICAL elites who lack solid values is something Matthews and O'Reilly do a lot. Take the recent New York Senate campaign. While reasonable people can disagree about the merits of Hillary's candidacy, Matthews and O'Reilly described the then-first lady as a corrupt member of some hated ruling class. As Matthews put it in a particularly memorable episode of "Hardball," "I look at this woman as a person who has, for whatever reason, a deep sense of entitlement . . . expecting the peasants to bring her bouquets of flowers. . . . Where did she get the idea the public should worship her as almost a goddess?" The sentiment was echoed by O'Reilly, who, amid the early Hillary speculation, declared: "[H]er demeanor is one of elitism, that she's a Yale-educated, very liberal, lives-in-her-mind-rather-than-in-the-real-world person."

Indeed, for Matthews and O'Reilly, the Clintons are poster children for the irresponsible liberal elites that working-class Americans despise: "Bill Clinton went to a school just like mine," Matthews tells me. "I always wondered why he didn't have any of it rub off on him." But because it largely ignores economics, the analysis can't explain why so many of those working-class people supported Clinton at the polls. Although many working-class Americans do indeed think the Clintons lack values, a majority have been willing to overlook them because, compared with people like Newt Gingrich, the Clintons seemed to be looking out for their economic interests. In 1996, for example, Bill Clinton captured Macomb County, Michigan, ground zero for Reagan Democrats and a county Democrats had not won since 1968. Hillary Clinton came within three points of carrying culturally conservative but economically depressed upstate New York—almost unheard of for a Democrat.

Yet after President Clinton swung through working-class pockets of Pennsylvania and upstate New York in 1999, O'Reilly was genuinely puzzled by his rock-star reception: "These are regular folks who are shoveling snow and trying to heat their homes. . . . Ronald Reagan was popular, but you didn't see the kind of adulation that people are throwing Clinton's way." When one guest had the audacity to suggest that "a lot of people relate to Bill Clinton," O'Reilly cut her off, snarling, "Most men aren't adulterers. Serial adulterers, I should say. Most men don't lie and put their wife on the 'Today' show to perpetuate the lie, and they don't embarrass their country, as President Clinton has." Maybe not. But what if those men (and women) were relating to the president's support for family and medical leave or a higher minimum wage?

And if their overwhelming focus on values led O'Reilly and Matthews to underestimate the Clintons, it has led them to overestimate President Bush. O'Reilly has opined that "George W. Bush seems like an honest man to me." Matthews has pointed out the contrast with Clinton: "[Bush] goes home at night to his wife. He's a good guy. He reads the Bible. He doesn't drink. He doesn't mess around. He works nine to five. . . ." Neither has dwelt on W.'s extensive ties to corporate interests.

In fact, Matthews and O'Reilly have even transformed Bush's tax cut, that most economic of issues, into a debate over cultural values. In February, O'Reilly declared that "a forty percent tax burden on working Americans is abusive" and that "[t]he answer [to America's fiscal health], as in everything in life, is discipline: No more hideous public housing, no more stolen education money or bloated Pentagon supply lines." Matthews later underscored the point, advising New Jersey Senator Jon Corzine that "middle-class people don't like rich people telling them they're going to be taxed to pay for poor people" and noting that Republicans were on the right track with a tax cut designed to appeal to the "working stiff." Although the tax cut contradicted Catholic teachings about inequality, Matthews and O'Reilly depicted its opponents as counterculture types, lumping them with opponents of missile defense and dismissing their views as "well-off liberal" or "straight left."

IN A COLUMN in March, *Slate.com* editor Michael Kinsley argued that O'Reilly's claim, put forth in a recent *Newsweek* profile, that he experienced class snobbery at a swank Washington affair couldn't possibly be true. It simply defied credulity, Kinsley insisted, that anyone would have stormed off, mid-conversation, because he or she had taken offense at O'Reilly's rough edges. O'Reilly, who by Kinsley's calculations had grown up solidly middle-class, was simply affecting victimhood to boost ratings and hawk books.

But, in a sense, Kinsley's column misses the point. O'Reilly's insistence that he's an outsider isn't an affectation; it's a delusion. Although his biography offers obvious proof to the contrary, O'Reilly—and, to some extent, Matthews—honestly see themselves as separate from an alien, hostile elite. In fact, it may be precisely because they grew up middle-class that Matthews and O'Reilly feel cultural alienation. In their parents' generation, Catholics really were economically subordinate, but as a result they lived more isolated lives—and thus experienced social snobbery less acutely. Matthews and O'Reilly are members of that generation of American Catholics who escaped the isolation of the old neighborhood. The result is that they experience cultural difference, and cultural condescension, much more keenly, even where it doesn't exist. O'Reilly wasn't lying—for him, cultural alienation fully defines the experience of being working-class.

The problem is that there are many Americans—including many Catholics in places like South Boston, Pittsburgh, and Buffalo, not to mention Latino East Los Angeles—who really are working-class. And they need their economic interests defended at least as vociferously as their cultural values. If only the two most popular talk-show hosts in America could distinguish between the two. ■

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Stanley Kauffmann on Films

Frustrations

I STILL CAN hardly believe it. A few years ago some producers decided to make a biographical film about a famous Viennese woman early in the last century, a musically gifted beauty so scintillating that three of the greatest artists of her day were mad about her and married her (in succession), whose uncountable lovers included other celebrated figures—a woman who captivated and inspired. The producers got a screenplay, engaged a noted director, commissioned gorgeous costumes. Then for this magnificent role, this exalting and free-spirited woman, they engaged an actress whose chief attainments were that she had modeled on several magazine covers, had appeared in several episodes of *Sex and the City*, and had starred opposite Arnold Schwarzenegger.

Bride of the Wind (Paramount Classics) is about Alma Schindler, whose husbands were Gustav Mahler, Walter Gropius, and Franz Werfel, and who was the "muse," as the term goes, of Oskar Kokoschka and others. (The film's title is that of a Kokoschka painting of Alma.) The actress who plays her is Sarah Wynter, about whom one can say at least that none of this is her fault, really. She was offered the part, naturally accepted, and does her pitifully inadequate best. The people who engaged Wynter are to blame for putting her in this role, in which not only is she blank in herself, but her blankness makes fools of the distinguished men enraptured by this Alma.

The screenplay by Marilyn Levy begins in 1902 and roller-skates through Alma's tumultuous life, marriages, and affairs until approximately the end of World War I. Then some screen titles appear to tell us what happened to the principals in subsequent years. Admittedly, though a superb actress would have improved matters, she could not have much lifted the screenplay's burdensome blend of heaviness and superficiality. The point of the film, seemingly, is that Alma's own musical gift was stifled by the men who married her. Mahler explicitly asked her not to compose. In the last sequence a song of hers is sung by a famous soprano of the day (actually Renée Fleming in splendid voice), and Alma accepts the audience's rapturous applause. Somewhere in this torpid script is the germ of an idea—a gifted woman revenging herself on the male strictures of her society by being an exultant sex goddess—but neither Levy nor Wynter comes near this idea.

It is almost embarrassing to record that the director was Bruce Beresford, who did *Breaker Morant* and *Tender Mercies*. Beresford makes the most of the *Schlagobers* Viennese settings—the film was shot in Austria—and of Shuna Harwood's delightful costumes. But there is not one moment in the film's motion or framing that is more than what a mediocre director might have done. And Beresford's failure with Wynter, even his failure to see how poor she is, is shocking.

The prize of the film, its only reward, is Jonathan Pryce's performance as Mahler. Playing geniuses is one of the great snares for actors (remember Richard Burton as Wagner), but Pryce has clearly thought long about the inner state of such a person, and presents a thoughtful, gentle, yet firm egotist with a being that explains, if it does not justify, his ego.

Simon Verhoeven as Gropius is a nullity; the part is underwritten, thus it all the more needed a forceful actor. Gregor Seberg plays Werfel hopefully—hoping that he is convincing us of the novelist's existence. Vincent Perez, who was apt as Nathalie Baye's lover in *An Affair of Love*, does a passable mad-artist turn as Kokoschka. (Allow me to include here a full account of my personal experience with Kokoschka. In the mid-1960s, in a New York television studio, I handed him a glass so that he could sample the bottle of Scotch that he had demanded before he would agree to a television interview.)

An Irish film, **A Love Divided** (Cinema Guild), is another picture based on fact, but, for a change, it is largely factual. This is a story that, back in 1957, apparently rocked both the North and the South.

A farm couple consists of a Catholic husband and a Protestant wife. We are told at the start that they had three weddings, a civil ceremony plus one each in their respective churches. They are happy until they differ over the education of their children. In order for their Catholic wedding to be performed, they both had to sign a pledge to send their children to Catholic schools. By 1957 the elder of their two daughters is ready for school, and the mother, Sheila, despite her pledge, sends her daughter to the local Protestant school. Sean, the father, objects less strongly than does the town priest, Father Stafford, who himself takes the child out of the Protestant school and puts her where he thinks she belongs.

Sheila refuses to accept this action, despite her signed pledge. That pledge was only a scrap of paper, she says, and has nothing to do, emotionally or spiritually, with what she feels now. We have to swallow hard to accept her rescinding of her word; still, we can understand the difference between the promise and, for her, the reality. Father Stafford then sets out, from his pulpit and elsewhere, to inflame the town against Sheila. Sean, under several pressures, agrees with him. To protect her children, Sheila abducts them and takes them, via some sort of Protestant underground railroad, to secret refuge with a family on the Scottish coast.

Father Stafford, further infuriated, incites the town to violence against the Protestants in their midst—shopkeepers and pub keepers and friends—and against Sheila's prosperous parents. The violence will persist, the priest threatens, until the children are returned to their father and to the church. By this time the trouble becomes more than a local story, more than a national one, a burden to the very church that had started it. Other measures are taken.

It is hardly obscure that the story of *A Love Divided* is a small symbol of large Irish troubles, of the power of demagogy. What is deeper and even more frightening is the ease with which principle becomes pleasure: the way that both the priest and the town's Catholics begin to relish their actions: his invective and their violence. There is little reluctance to assault the Protestants who had been their neighbors and friends, and before long we sense what so often seems true of angry mobs incited by patriotism or principle: the originating idea, if there was one, is swamped by sheer enjoyment of the action. Which of course leads us to wonder about the repressed hatred, the repressed urge to action, that must have existed all along in this town. (And after settlement, can these people all live together again?) Which leads us further to wonder about terribly similar situations around the globe.

Stuart Hepburn's screenplay stays as far

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away as it can from the familiar dialogue that might have burdened many of the scenes; and Sydney Macartney, whose previous directing experience had been mostly in television, deals freshly with situations that also could have been clichés. As the farm couple, Liam Cunningham and Orly Brady are adequate. Peter Caffrey as a Protestant pub keeper is quietly staunch. As the priest, Tony Doyle has, in theatrical terms, the best part, and he makes the intelligent most of it. ■

Have no fear. Genes aren't everything.

Heredity and Humanity

By Francis S. Collins, Lowell Weiss, *and* Kathy Hudson

Forty-eight years ago, James Watson and Francis Crick introduced DNA's elegant double helix to the world in the pages of *Nature*. With extravagant understatement, they began their report by noting that DNA's "structure has novel features which are of considerable biological interest." Four months ago, with the publication of the sequence and the analysis of the human genome, scientists offered further evidence of just how considerable. Researchers gained a wealth of fresh insights into the miracle of life, and uncovered new mysteries that will occupy biomedical researchers for years to come.

Unfortunately, the new focus on the genome has left some people with the impression that DNA's power is perhaps *too* considerable—that is, that genes are too great a factor in defining who we are. This fear is understandable. It seems that every morning we awake to a news story presenting yet another way in which our genes appear to be controlling us, like the proverbial tail that wags the dog: "Scientists Zero in on 'Genius Gene' "; "Kennedy Tragedies Linked to 'Risk-Taking Gene' "; "Diabetes Gene Poses Risk for Latinos"; "Scientists Say a Study of Brothers Proves Existence of a 'Gay Gene.' "

With a torrent of headlines such as these, reasonable people have come to fear that the more we learn about the human genome, the more we will see that every aspect of the human condition—from illness to intelligence to fear itself—is just the inevitable product of an unyielding, unfeeling genetic code. For this reason, they worry that our new genomic knowledge represents not a giant leap for humankind but rather a giant demotion. Perhaps we are just marionettes being tugged along by the strands of our DNA. Perhaps our lives are nothing more than a formulaic drama, with a plot line that was finalized before our birth.

Fortunately, ten years of intensive study of the human genome have provided ample evidence that these fears of genetic determinism are unwarranted. It has shown us definitively that we human beings are far more than the sum of our genetic parts. Needless to say, our genes play a major, formative role in human development—and in many of the processes of human disease; but high-tech molecular studies as well as low-tech (but still eminently useful) studies of identical and fraternal twins make it perfectly evident that our genes are not all-determining factors in the human experience.

To put it starkly, we have seen nothing in recent studies to suggest that nature's role in development is larger, or nurture's role smaller, than we previously thought. This is certainly an exciting time in genetic research; but if nature were to take advantage of this klieg-lights moment and boldly declare that it is in charge, history would remember it the same way we remember Alexander Haig.

In large measure, the fear of genetic determinism stems from misconceptions of how genetics works. As high school students, our first exposure to genetics came through the story of Gregor Mendel's experiments with his garden peas. First, we learned that each parent pea plant contributed one copy of each of its genes to its offspring. Second, we learned that certain genes were "dominant" and others "recessive." (The gene for white flowers [*W*] is dominant, while the gene for purple flowers [*w*] is recessive.) And third, we learned that a plant would need to inherit two copies of a recessive gene to manifest a recessive trait, but only one copy of a dominant gene to manifest a dominant trait. Offspring—to use the example of flower color—would grow white flowers if they inherited any of the following gene patterns: *Ww*, *wW*, or *WW*. Purple flowers, in contrast, result only from one combination: *ww*.

All of the above is correct—for flowers and for pea plants. But when it comes to the study of complex human beings, we must take Mendel's peas with a giant shake of salt. Despite what your high school biology teacher told you, Mendelian rules do not apply even to eye color or hair color. Truth be told, they do not apply to most characteristics of peas or other plants, either. As Robin Marantz Henig documented in her wonderful book *The Monk in the Garden*, Mendel himself came to question the validity of his work on peas when he turned to the study of the hawkweed and got much more complex and confusing results.

This is not to say that deterministic Mendelian rules never apply to human traits and disorders. One classic case in which they certainly apply is sickle-cell anemia, a painful and often life-threatening disease that is caused by the presence of an abnormal form of hemoglobin (hemoglobin S) and that disproportionately afflicts families of African descent. Like purple flowers in pea plants, sickle-cell anemia is a recessive trait; it manifests itself in those who inherit two copies of the hemoglobin S gene.

And yet even in this case, human genetics proves far more complicated, and far less deterministic, than Mendel's pea flowers. It turns out that every case of sickle-cell anemia is not created equal. Even when patients have the same two copies of the hemoglobin S gene, the disease may manifest itself in different ways. This is in part because a separate set of genes in the genome—genes that code for fetal hemoglobin—can counteract some of the ill effects of the

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adult hemoglobin S genes. In most people, fetal hemoglobin genes turn off a few months after birth and the adult hemoglobin genes take over; but sometimes the fetal hemoglobin genes are "leaky," and they continue to produce fetal hemoglobin even into adulthood. When people with two copies of the hemoglobin S gene also inherit leaky fetal hemoglobin genes, their sickle-cell symptoms are usually much less severe. So sickle-cell anemia, widely considered to be the classic single-gene Mendelian disease, is not so clear-cut after all.

Phenylketonuria (PKU), a rare disorder that can cause severe mental retardation, is an even better example of how the most deterministic of genes may not determine much in real life. Like sickle-cell anemia, PKU is a recessive trait. If a child inherits two copies of the PKU gene, then he will get the disease. And yet, thanks to the newborn screening program now in place in all fifty states, the child will never experience mental retardation or the other devastating effects of PKU. Since the illness results from an inability to metabolize the amino acid phenylalanine, if you simply remove foods with phenylalanine from the child's diet, he or she will live a normal and healthy life. PKU is one hundred percent hard-wired in the genes. Yet it can be effectively cured with a one hundred percent environmental intervention.

Keep in mind also that sickle-cell anemia and PKU are about the closest people come to following Mendel's rules. When we look at other human diseases, the picture is far more complicated, with many more genes involved and an even greater involvement of environmental factors. Consider the case of juvenile (or type I) diabetes. Despite what researchers and reporters may have projected to the public over the past two years, there is no single "gene for diabetes." Instead, there are fifteen or more genes that may team up in an array of combinations to produce diabetes. In one person, having variants in five of these genes might be enough to cause symptoms, while in another it might take nine variants.

These gene-gene interactions represent just one layer of complexity. Gene-environment interactions represent an entirely different story. We now believe that type I cases require not only a series of gene variants but also an external environmental trigger—probably a childhood viral infection. If that is the case, it is entirely possible that in the near future researchers will identify the viral offender, produce a childhood vaccine against it for those who are genetically at risk, and ease the fears of parents all over the world.

It follows from all this that the common use of the shorthand term "the gene for illness X" by scientists and journalists is deeply misleading. If illness X is not one of the rare single-gene Mendelian diseases, then the so-called "gene for illness X" is more correctly described as "a gene variant that may, in combination with other genetic and environmental factors, increase the risk of developing illness X." Just think of how many times in recent years we have heard the inherently deterministic label "the gene for breast cancer" in reference to the genes BRCA1 and BRCA2. For starters, BRCA1 and BRCA2 are actually *anti*-cancer genes. It is when someone inherits an abnormality in these genes that she can develop breast cancer or ovarian cancer.

But the larger point is that not everyone who has abnormalities in the BRCA1 or BRCA2 genes develops breast cancer, and not everyone who develops breast cancer has BRCA1 or BRCA2 abnormalities. Calling them "the genes for breast cancer" hopelessly confuses a correlation with a cause. And recall also the case of PKU: despite the fact that it is a single-gene Mendelian disease, nurture (in the form of a change of diet) still can trump nature. So yes, gene variants can and do increase our risk of developing diseases. But only extremely rarely do they determine our fate.

WHY, THEN, ALL the fuss about the genomic revolution in medicine? If disease susceptibility is not deterministic, will it be all that revealing to discover the glitches that all of us have within our DNA? It most certainly will. First, identifying our individual predispositions to future illness will allow individualized programs of preventive medicine, in which we modify lifestyle, diet, and medical surveillance to reduce the risk of illness. In most cases, the resulting treatments will not be the all-or-nothing scenario of PKU; they will have much more in common with the steps that many of us are already taking to reduce our serum cholesterol (for which the set point has strong genetic roots) in an effort to lower our risk of heart disease.

More importantly, perhaps, every disease-susceptibility gene that scientists identify will shine a bright light on the molecular pathway by which that illness comes about. The proper understanding of those pathways offers us the best opportunity ever to develop targeted therapies that work. Even if someone's case of heart disease or cancer has only weak genetic roots, the knowledge of the pathway involved, discerned by the study of genetics, can form the basis of a treatment that may cure his or her disease.

But what about non-disease-related traits, such as intelligence and violent behavior? When it comes to behavioral traits like these, after all, a little genetic determinism can go a long way. The discovery of a prevalent gene variant strongly correlated with violence could have a profound effect upon our millennia-old understanding of free will, and weigh down the scales of justice in two equally dangerous ways. If someone who commits a violent crime has the gene variant, his lawyer could use a DNA defense ("If it's in the gene, the man is clean!"), and the defendant could well be seen by a judge and jury as not responsible for his actions. Yet it is also possible to imagine a scenario in which someone who has never even contemplated a violent act is found to have the gene variant and then subjected to the presumption of guilt (or even sent away to a postmodern-day leper colony) for the rest of his life.

If genes truly controlled behavior, our justice system and its guiding principle of equal protection would not be the only casualties. How would our concept of equal opportunity survive? What about the idea of merit? Just think of the frightening "genetocracy" depicted in the movie *Gattaca* (and note the letters that make up its name), a world in which children are assigned to castes at birth, based on an assessment of their intellectual capacity and professional potential as inscribed in their DNA.

THESE FEARS, TOO, are unwarranted. To be sure, scientists will find many behavioral factors in the genes. Researchers have long known that there is one extremely common genetic factor that confers at least a ten-fold increase in the propensity to exhibit criminally violent behavior. It is called the Y chromosome. No one has suggested that all those who possess this genetic marker—that is, all males—ought to be seen as lacking free will or inherently possessing criminal intent. More to the point, the case of the Y chromosome is an almost absurd extreme. In the vast majority of cases, genetic factors exert a much smaller influence on patterns of behavior and capability.

In 1998, for example, a researcher reported the discovery of the first gene correlated with general cognitive ability. Reports in the press lauded it as the "genius gene." Given humankind's history of eugenics (the hard diabolical Hitler kind and the soft insidious *Bell Curve* kind), the discovery of a gene linked to intelligence was genuinely explosive stuff. In reality, however, the so-called "genius gene" was found to give a boost of exactly two points on IQ tests. That's right: two points. Valuable science, yes. Society-altering discovery, no.

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New findings that flow from the completion of the human genome draft are likely to follow the same complicated and undeterministic pattern. According to the combined wisdom of twin studies and molecular studies, human behaviors appear to be like the most complex diseases: if a particular behavior has a heritable component at all, it involves the interaction of numerous genes and numerous environmental influences. Surely this should come as no surprise. After all, behavior is a product of the brain, which is by far our most complex organ, and one that continues to develop throughout a lifetime of living and learning.

To build on a metaphor offered by the biologist Johnjoe McFadden, looking for genes that encode our unique behaviors and the other products of our minds is like analyzing the strings of a violin or the keys of a piano in the hope of finding the *Emperor* Concerto. Indeed, the human genome can be thought of as the grandest of orchestras, with each of our approximately thirty thousand genes representing a unique instrument playing in the wondrous and massive concert that is molecular biology. Each instrument is essential, and each must be in tune to produce the proper (and highly sophisticated) musical sound. Likewise, genes are essential to the development of the brain, and must be "in tune" to produce functioning neurons and neurotransmitters. But this emphatically does not imply that genes make minds any more than a viola or a piccolo makes a sonata.

For many of us, there is still another powerful reason, wholly apart from the mechanics of science, to reject the notion that DNA is the core substance of our humanity. It is the belief that a higher power must also play some role in who we are and what we become. Of course, some scientists and writers dismiss this spiritual notion as pure superstition. Thus Richard Dawkins has observed that "we are machines built by DNA whose purpose is to make copies of the same DNA.... It is every living object's sole reason for living." Really? Is there nothing about being human that is different from being a bacterium or a slug?

Can the study of genetics and molecular biology really account for the universal intrinsic knowledge of right and wrong common to all human cultures in all eras (though all of us have trouble acting on this knowledge)? Can it account for the unselfish form of love that the Greeks called *agape*? Can it account for the experience of feeling called to sacrifice for others even when our own DNA may be placed at risk? While evolutionary biologists proffer various explanations for human behaviors that undermine the efficient propagation of our genes, there is something about those claims that rings hollow to us.

The notion that science alone holds all the secrets of our existence has become a religion of its own. The faith of Dawkins and others in biology seems even greater than the faith of the simple believer in God. Science is the proper way to understand the natural, of course; but science gives us no reason to deny that there are aspects of human identity that fall outside the sphere of nature, and hence outside the sphere of science. For most believers, God has no meaning unless God is more than nature. If God is more than nature, then studying the natural may never reveal the true mystery.

In the end, we must acknowledge that we human beings have only scratched the surface of self-understanding. The structure of DNA does hold considerable interest for this line of inquiry; but it would be the purest form of hubris to take our rudimentary knowledge of our genetic code, craft theories about it with our puny minds, and declare that nature has once and for all trumped nurture and toppled God. This is the kind of arrogance that humans alone seem to possess, and that genes alone could never explain. ■

The Anthropologist

By Nicholas Lemann

Washington by Meg Greenfield

(PublicAffairs, 272 pp., $26)

Meg Greenfield was a participant-observer. This, her one book, written during her terminal illness and published posthumously, is meant to be less a memoir of her career as Washington correspondent for *The Reporter* and then columnist and editor of the editorial page at *The Washington Post* than a lengthily researched field study of the culture of highest-level Washington. That was a corner of the world from which, at least rhetorically, she always kept a stagy ironic distance: "they seem to me to be something Else besides Human Life," says the epigraph from William Blake that she has chosen. But that same Washington was also—as she admits more candidly in this book than she usually did in print—the place where she lived. She stands as a relatively rare example of the writer who attempts to chronicle the private life of a ruling elite while also exercising power within it—rather than being merely a dinner-party ornament, in the manner of most writers who get within close range of elites.

I can't get away with referring to the author as "Greenfield," because I knew her and I think of her, inescapably, as Meg. She was a funny mix of old-fashioned and informal: the sign on the door of her office defiantly said "Miss Greenfield," but she insisted that even people a generation younger, such as myself, call her by her first name. In her writing she took pains always to demonstrate that she was self-aware enough to be able to present a caricature of her position. Having a thought while watching herself have the thought was a central strategy of Meg's prose.

Far be it from her actually to say straight out, without a few layers of protection, that she was a proud member of the Washington Establishment. Instead she would put a triple-reverse spin on it: here she describes herself as "an editorial-pronouncing, Sanhedrin-status heavy at *The Washington Post*." The point is, that is precisely what she was. She lunched at the Jockey Club and dined in Georgetown, she knew every important personage in town, she paid visits to foreign heads of state and they to her, and she was usually right in the middle of the subtle, fine-grained process by which the capital's elders decided which people and ideas were okay and which were not okay.

Her conversation, like her column, often began with a great merry send-up of whatever the leading ridiculousness of the moment was in Washington—in the spoken version, complete with imitations of the perpetrators. Meg was a small person with a deep, resonant, smoke-cured voice; her compact features arranged themselves alternately into a twinkling expression or

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an intensely evaluating one. The opening shtick, besides being entertaining and intimacy-creating, was a way of establishing her bona fides: she was not one of *those* Washingtonians, the ones who are so puffed up that they are no longer in on the cosmic joke. She thought of herself as an outsider. (A passing remark in her book about journalism drawing "young Jewish men and women who were attracted to writing and habituated by upbringing to a somewhat on-the-outskirts observer's role in society" struck me as a self-description.) Then, turning more serious, even deeply concerned, her eyes narrowed, her lips pursed, she would sketch out the seriously bad idea that underlay the ridiculousness, delivering her elegant and elaborately considered judgments in long sentences and bountiful paragraphs.

The language that went with Meg's project had the great virtue (it is amazingly rare in Washington journalism) of being graceful, informal, and free of cliché. She never gave you ornate hearing rooms or powerful committee chairmen. She could be funny and memorable, as in: "Virtually all public, official, political discourse has a fairly constant water-to-meat ratio of falsehood ... more or less on a par with your average supermarket canned ham." But the double role that she played—official voice of *The Washington Post* and by-lined columnist—obviously constrained her as a writer. Like a lot of Washington journalists, Meg knew a great deal more than she put into print, and you could feel her withholding the juicy details and the salty opinions from her columns because they would stain the purity of the institutional editorial-writing process over which she presided.

So she often expressed herself in generalities that could be difficult to decode. She would lay out a position in parody form, but without saying which particular idiot it was who held it, and then signal that she understood and had assimilated its good points but had arrived at a more sensible position of her own: "I'm not recommending that we become a bunch of civic boosters or soft-hearted sob sisters or spikers of stories that might hurt some politician's or civic reformer's feelings—only that we at least try to be aware of our effect on the lives of our subjects." She would declare herself to be a contrarian ("here is another even less reputable idea to which I also subscribe") without it being clear, unless you were as deeply inside Washington as she was, exactly what she was contradicting.

The disjunction between her insistent tone of unpretentiousness and the somewhat mysterious position of authority that she occupied as a writer, which entailed the sending of encrypted messages through the public prints to a small audience that understood them perfectly, made it hard to figure out what Meg really thought about Washington. As both the foreword and the afterword to her book—by Katharine Graham and Michael Beschloss respectively—point out, she was an extremely guarded person anyway. If there was a bit of unclarity about her position, perhaps that was fine with her.

BOOKS HAVE A way, though, of bringing their authors out into the open. This book makes it much plainer how Meg felt, at least about Washington. It turns out to be quite simple: the Washington to which Meg objected and the Washington that she occupied were not the same place. The bad Washington, to her mind, was what I would call populist Washington—that is, the portion of the city that was oriented toward the vast, passionate, uninformed public. There were two main subcategories of this Washington, slightly overlapping: media-hound Washington—"the abstract, bloodless, phony, self-inflating world of endless competitive image projection" (whew!), composed of people (journalists as well as politicians) who spent their time posturing for television cameras; and reformer Washington, made up of people who preachily took up bold positions on this issue or that issue.

The main sins of media-hound Washington were conceit and falseness. It was populated by "swaggery, balloon-headed types" who could be found "feigning indifference to how they look in their quite self-conscious comings and goings," or speaking "over a casual drink or at the supermarket ... as if orating at the United Nations." Reformer Washington, made up of "relentless ... naysayers, investigators, and grouches" with "a perceptible touch of self-satisfaction, perhaps bordering on grandiosity, about their roles as designated skunks," preferred self-righteous showboating to getting things done. Working in tandem, the two kinds of populists had created a world of loud, un-nuanced, easy public judgmentalism that Meg could not abide.

Her position was really an update, though more coyly and comically stated, of Walter Lippmann's analysis in *Public Opinion*. "The great Opinion of Unseen Unknown Others Blob is the Loch Ness monster of American public life," Meg declares, and the media-hound Washington public figure is "the great Blob's love slave." She recognized that Washington is necessarily reactive to biennial election results, which means its leading figures are forever "on professional probation"; they cannot afford simply to ignore polls and cameras and the other appurtenances of public opinion. Her anthropology of Washington includes the observation that many officials develop two-track personalities: one track for the public, one for private. "The two-track conversation is as close as the capital comes to having its own language," she says—an accurate point, no doubt, but also a chilling one. (I thought she might have been thinking of Al Gore, an old friend of hers, in passages such as this.)

But her heart was with the Washington figures who, by virtue of occupying a safe seat or a technical job, had the luxury (and of course the inclination) to ignore the Blob altogether—the people who could focus all their energies on accomplishing specific missions with modesty and skill, never seeming grandiose or fake. "These folks are the class of Washington," she asserts, in one of her rare short, straightforward, uninflected sentences. She was thinking of people such as Alice Rivlin and Sam Nunn and, I guess, herself.

WHEN BEING SATIRICAL, Meg several times points out that Washington is populated by straight arrows and parent-pleasers: "not the ones who put the cat in the dryer, but the ones who tattled." She hardly exempts herself; she was, she tells us, "fifty years old at birth." Once she has made it clear that she knows the way in which her kind can be ridiculed, she spends most of the book mounting a defense. When she arrived in Washington from New York during the Kennedy administration, Meg quickly learned the classic insider's lesson: the people who look from a distance like the good guys—in her time they were the pro-civil-rights Northern liberals—were usually easy poseurs, and the people who generate real progress were non-ideological worker bees of whom she had never heard. More broadly, in her view, at every moment there is a counterfeit prevailing drama in Washington, and then there is the real game, which is not on television and in which the bullshitters do not play. Meg allied herself with the party of accomplishment rather than the party of grandstanding, and for the last quarter-century of her life she worried that the former was fading and the latter rising.

She believed that it was far nobler to get close to Washington's higher class of bigshots and thus to be fully privy to, even to participate in, their canny, pragmatic project, than to stand apart and moralize on the basis of incomplete information. Several times in her book she comes out in favor of journalists socializing with—and so, inevitably, also empathizing with—policymakers of both parties. She certainly lived by this creed. One of her few pub-

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licly embarrassing moments came when Nancy Reagan in her memoirs had Meg calling to sympathize about the difficulty of being on the receiving end of the Iran-Contra investigation. In the book Meg gently denies the story, and offers this very careful and complicated apologia for her social relationship with the First Lady:

> But it was dumb and careless of me to expect that anyone else would or even could notice the fine lines I was drawing in my own mind demarcating the social from the professional on these occasions, the propositions I refrained from agreeing or even nodding to, the conversations on certain subjects in which I did not participate.

We get just enough of Meg's life story here to be able to make a few guesses about why she so revered Establishment Washington. Beschloss offers, as a possible Rosebud, a story that the dying Meg told him about accompanying her raffish father to a prison where he was going to entertain the inmates, and being horrified when it turned out that one of them was a friend of his. She had the total respect for authority of somebody who grew up feeling that there was not quite enough of it in her household. Although she had a quasi-bohemian past—a spell in Europe, an unfinished novel, field work in reform politics, an apartment in Greenwich Village, even a little psychoanalysis—she was, more deeply, a member of the Silent Generation, who regarded protest as automatically suspect and was deeply loyal to the system.

She explains why she went into journalism by observing that "for me, it was a step into, not away from responsibility." Her early Adlai Stevenson period and a series of memorable pieces in *The Reporter* making fun of Richard Nixon gained her a reputation for being more liberal than she ever actually was. In fact, she was wooed though not entirely won by the neoconservatives (after much agonizing she opposed Robert Bork's appointment to the Supreme Court, for example), and she made the editorial pages less liberal than they were under her predecessor Philip Geyelin. I always thought that she felt most politically comfortable around conservative Democrats of the Nunn variety.

Another aspect of the draw of the drawing rooms for Meg was that they functioned as a family for her, and she did not have a family of her own. Her mother died when she was a child; her father and her only sibling, a brother, died when she was relatively young. She never married. For the two decades that she ran the *Post*'s editorial page, she had to hire and to fire people, to accept and to reject op-ed pieces, to run and to kill columns, and to come out for and against confirmations and cherished initiatives—it was an isolating job. Both Beschloss and Graham make her sound quite lonely, and so intensely private, past the point of mere rectitude, as to indicate that she was protecting a series of emotional wounds from being reopened. She was alternately jolly and charming, and inapproachably remote. "There was some sort of lone fortress there into which one did not intrude," Graham says. Washington gratified her, or horrified her, with a special intensity because it was being made to do an awful lot of work in her life.

Meg Greenfield by Victor Juhasz for The New Republic

Meg was much less bemused and detached than you would have guessed from the look of her outer layer. The most deeply felt chapter of *Washington*, called "Women and Children," is about the toll that official life takes on the families of the officials. I suspect that she so completely nails the deep disappointments of politicians' children because she felt some of the same disappointments herself: Washington, even her preferred version of it, simply could not provide the rich emotional sustenance that she hoped it would. "So-called private or family life became in fact little more than a Clausewitzian pursuit of career by other means," she writes of politicians, with a withering force that would seem to indicate that she had been on the receiving end of such behavior.

The big surprise of this chapter is that Meg comes out as a feminist. Needless to say, she takes pains to assure us that she isn't one of *those* feminists. After recounting in vivid detail several decades' worth of humiliations visited upon her because of her sex—she was not permitted to read the news ticker in the National Press Building; and at the *Post* she had to be "scrupulously careful not to say or do anything that might be perceived as *threatening* to the editorial-page men's—well, you know" (an uncharacteristic touch of *Thelma and Louise* there, eh?)—she observes that the litany "embarrasses me a little because it sounds so whiny." And she complains, characteristically, about the feminist movement's "extreme, off-the-wall, attention-grabbing" excesses. But then she writes:

> I was surprised . . . at how much resonance some of the message turned out to have for recalcitrant old fuds like me and many of my associates and friends, women who had long since accommodated to the culture of Washington and found their own ways to work in it. . . . I cannot tell you how many times, after we had ritually made plain to one another all our innumerable reservations about what was going on in the movement, we would end up saying, "But you know, there *is* something" to this or that claim.

I was amazed by this, because I had grown so accustomed to Miss Greenfield making declarations such as the one

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quoted by Graham in her foreword, that for her liberation would mean "three small children and a washing machine . . . and a fella." One can only guess at how deeply she had to bury the fairly tame feminist sentiments that she expresses in her book—so deeply that she usually could not find them—in order to be able to take part in the constrained subculture that functioned as her emotional home for most of her adult life.

MEG SEVERAL TIMES makes the charge in *Washington* that Washington is uniquely horrible, compared with other American cities. She had some basis for this opinion, because in her later years she bought a house in Seattle, her hometown, and made herself a member of the Establishment there, too. Still, her Washington-bashing reminds me of that old joke whose punch line is "Look who thinks he's nobody!" It is partly an act, and partly the product of dashed high expectations. For what is most distinctive about Washington is not its badness but its lack of agency (though not, God knows, its lack of agencies).

Washington responds to changes in the culture, the demographics, and the economics of the country far more than it engenders those changes. As a result, as Meg clearly saw, even most of its loftiest characters were forced to live in a much higher state of insecurity than their counterparts in other places. Tom Foley, from her home state, was speaker of the House one day and finished forever in elective politics the next. That kind of thing does not happen to Seattle business leaders of similar wattage. It is only natural that Washington personages would express the fragility of their position through an array of exaggerated behaviors associated with nervousness.

In her book Meg demonstrates an unfulfilled yearning for an ideal Washington, where people would be stout and sturdy and true. That helps to account for her splitting of the capital into good and bad parts, the good fiercely defended, the bad mercilessly derided; she was performing radical emotional surgery, cutting out the large diseased portion in the hope of saving the beloved patient's life. If she had wanted less from Washington, she might have been more willing to see its prancing inconstancy as inevitable in the capital city of a democratic republic. Instead she embraced her own tough-minded sub-Washington so tightly that she accepted without complaint the not inconsiderable restrictions that it imposed. Those included not being able to express any inconveniently blowsy sentiments—want, pain, hurt—that may have resided in her soul. ■

The Real Nightingale

By ELLEN HANDLER SPITZ

Hans Christian Andersen: The Life of a Storyteller by Jackie Wullschlager

(Alfred A. Knopf, 489 pp., $30)

THE FRONTISPIECE OF our family's edition of Hans Christian Andersen's fairy tales was a gossamer, delicately colored pen-and-ink drawing wrought by Arthur Rackham. It depicted the eccentric author, with his long nose, high forehead, wavy hair, and slightly foppish attire. Speaking animatedly and gesturing dramatically with a great pair of scissors in one hand, he grasps in his other hand a paper cutout that he is in the midst of fashioning. A crenellated paper castle and several fragile paper figures already adorn the wooden-drum tabletop before him, and beside him on the couch nestles a dainty child with ringlet curls and a nosegay; her small feet curl under her as she listens intently to Andersen.

This picture, hidden just inside the gold-embossed cover of the hand-sewn book, was protected by a layer of tissue that I would gently raise to reveal the scene beneath. Rackham originally drew it to illustrate one of Andersen's very first tales, "Little Ida's Flowers," published in 1835, which he wrote for the four-year-old daughter of a prominent Danish intellectual with whom he hoped to socialize. Jackie Wullschlager, in her wonderful biography, quite reasonably views this as a parallel to Lewis Carroll's writing *Alice in Wonderland* for Alice Liddell, the young daughter of one of his colleagues in England.

But as a child I was certain that the tales were written just for me. No small part of that feeling came from Andersen's style: his stories speak directly, colloquially, to children. "Did you ever hear the story of the old Street Lamp? It is not very remarkable, but it may be listened to once in a while," he whispers at the beginning of "The Old Street Lamp." Or: "You should have known Aunty. She was so charming" ("Aunty"). Or: "Surely you know what a microscope is—that wonderful glass which makes everything appear a hundred times larger than it really is" ("The Drop of Water").

A century and a quarter after his death, Hans Christian Andersen continues to wield his imaginary shears, shaping for each succeeding generation the contours of our fantasy lives and the figures with which we embellish our rhetoric and our everyday conversations. His tales and his images have become so deeply embedded in our mainstream bank of cultural capital that they are drawn upon unreflectively by many people who have quite forgotten the form of the original deposits. The ugly duckling, the princess and the pea, the nightingale, the little match girl, the steadfast tin soldier, the emperor's new clothes: they have all become metaphors, as central to our rhetorical repertory as references from the Bible, Greek mythology, folklore, or Shakespeare. By reminding us of their beginnings (and ours), by returning us to them, and by reclaiming for our attention their creator, a figure of wonder and immense literary significance, Wullschlager causes us to marvel at our neglect of him, and of the genre that he developed to such heights.

Principally, of course, Wullschlager's meticulously researched and beautifully written book investigates what sort of man Hans Christian Andersen of Denmark actually was. Beyond this, however, Wullschlager's book asks us to reconsider more generally the abiding power of our earliest cultural experiences. By prompting us to revisit Andersen's work through sets of overlapping frames—taking us directly into his life, much as, in "Old Shut-Eye," Ole Lukøje takes Hjalmar right into the painted picture that is hanging on his wall—Wullschlager implicitly asks us to pay heed to the works of other writers and artists whose words leave a powerful imprint on growing minds.

But Andersen was not only a writer of tales for children. In addition to poetry, dramas, and comedies for the Copenhagen Royal Theater, he also wrote travel books (such as *Pictures of Sweden*, which opens with a colloquy between a swallow and a stork and describes Andersen's

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sojourn in a small town called Dalcaria, where he charmed his hostess by cutting out shapes for her famous ginger biscuits—dancing girls with pointed toes, mosques complete with minarets, windmills, and nutcrackers in riding boots); novels (such as *The Improvisatore, or Life in Italy* and *Only a Fiddler*, the latter of which displays his deep and sympathetic interest in Jews as fellow outsiders in Danish society at a time when, as Wullschlager points out, "caricature was the [literary] norm"); and versions of his continually revised autobiography, which he called, variously, *The Story of My Life* and *The Fairy Tale of My Life*. None of these writings, of course, has captivated the attention of the English-reading public in the same way as his tales.

Despite Andersen's varied literary activities, the world of his own youth was never far from his mind. Andersen clung tenaciously and ambivalently to his childhood, and he used it shamelessly throughout his life to create his self-representations and to promote himself as a "fairy tale child" and an "unworldly innocent." Wullschlager's depiction of Andersen throughout her study reminds one of one of Dickens's most memorable and vexatious characters, Harold Skimpole of *Bleak House*, who is described as a "brilliant, vivacious, sentimental but thoroughly selfish man." (Andersen had some complicated exchanges with Dickens, whom he greatly admired and twice visited in England in the 1840s and 1850s.)

Like Dickens's ingratiating but infuriatingly self-righteous character, Andersen was affectedly childlike, dependent, an eternal guest who lived briefly in the house of a German prince. His captivating gaiety notwithstanding, he was unable to fend well for himself, and was always beholden to others. Also like Skimpole, Andersen, who cultivated a naïve enthusiasm, was obsequious, deeply insecure, self-absorbed, and self-pitying, as well as arrogant and snobbish; but he managed throughout his life to attract kindly women who were able to ignore his foibles and to look out for his well-being. Utterly unlike Skimpole, Andersen was an artist of consummate brilliance.

Andersen was born in 1805 in the small town of Odense, on Denmark's island of Funen. The only child of poor working-class parents who had married just two months before his arrival, Andersen never failed in later years to describe his childhood with romantic nostalgia, and also with unabating incredulity that from such humble origins he had been able to rise so far in the world. Eventually he achieved such renown that on the occasion of his seventieth birthday he was summoned from his bed (he was suffering from a fatal liver ailment) by the king to the royal palace at Amalienborg, honored, showered with congratulations from all over Europe, fêted at a banquet in which each dish and wine was named after one of his tales, decorated by the German Grand Duke Carl Alexander with the Weimar Order of the Commander, and presented with an edition of one of his books translated into fifteen languages.

About the trajectory of his life he wove a tale as romantic as any of the stories for which he is famous, and at the same time—again like the fairy tales themselves, which convey truth through fiction—the tale that he invented was fundamentally true. "My life is really a poetic story, surely I am a poet," he wrote in a letter of 1837. "The son of a poor washerwoman running around in the streets of Odense in his wooden shoes has already come so far that he is treated like a son in the home of one of Denmark's most esteemed men and has friends among honourable and wonderful people."

A lonely child with a dreamy nature, Andersen seems to have felt early on like an outsider; it was a feeling that he would later project onto many of his characters and tales. Histrionic and effeminate, he spent long hours by himself, fantasizing. He remembered being kissed by a little Jewish girl named Sara who wanted to be a dairymaid in a mansion someday, and he promised her a post in his castle when he grew up. As if following the yet-to-be-written script of Freud's "family romance," he told her that he was actually a changeling born into a noble family, and he drew a picture of his castle for her. The fantasy proved proleptic. But Andersen's ungainly physical appearance—he was thin, tall, gawky, gangly of limb, awkward, and possessed of an unusually large nose—led him to believe that he was unattractive to others. This perception undoubtedly affected his love life and his inhibited bisexuality in later years, and perhaps contributed to one of his most memorable creations, the ugly duckling.

Arthur Rackham, "'Why do my flowers look so faded today?'," 1932

Andersen was gifted with a fervid imagination and a theatrical flair that he drew on throughout his life, ever blurring the boundaries between fantasy and reality. As a boy, he invented plays and dramatic stories, and improvised songs that he loved to perform for anyone who would listen, and in time he was dubbed "the little nightingale from Funen." He enjoyed dressing up and playing with a puppet theater and with dolls, whose clothes he designed; and he listened eagerly to the tales of his paternal grandmother and other older women. On one occasion, while sleigh-riding, he reports that he fell into a pond and, while his own clothes

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were drying before the fire, put on the clothes of a girl. From early childhood on, multiple self-identifications seemed to flow easily for him without the usual barriers of gender or class; he went so far as to identify psychologically with animals and even inanimate objects.

This phenomenon is borne out by his tales, the protagonists of which are frequently female or non-human. One thinks of "Thumbelina," "The Fir Tree," "The Marsh King's Daughter," "The Top and the Ball," "The Pen and the Inkstand," and even "Auntie Toothache" of 1872, in which the artist's suffering is personified as a female figure but is in fact a part of himself. "The Fir Tree" especially seems an allegory for Andersen's unfulfilled longings. The little tree is forever dissatisfied with its lot—first with its place in the forest, among sunbeams and songbirds, with red clouds above and wild strawberries below. Always, it yearns for something beyond. ("Something better, something still grander, must follow—but what? O, how I long, how I suffer! I do not know myself what is the matter with me!") Soon it is chopped down, ornamented with tinsel as a Christmas tree, and then dismantled and stashed away in a loft among friendly mice. Finally the tree is chopped into pieces, and as it is being burnt into ash, with the flames leaping up, Andersen writes, "it sighed so deeply! Each sigh was like a shot."

ANDERSEN'S CHILDHOOD WAS brought to a painful halt when he was eleven years old with the death of his father, a shoemaker who had gone off to fight in the Napoleonic Wars and returned ailing. Andersen recalled that when his father's corpse lay stretched out on the bed, his mother told him not to speak to his father, for the "Ice Maiden" had carried him away. Andersen immortalized this image years later in the story of that name, set in the Swiss Alps, where a boy named Rudy is kissed on the lips by the Ice Maiden but then escapes her for many years, until finally, just at the moment when he is about to be united with his young love, she manages to trap him and to kiss him once again, claiming him forever.

The death of Andersen's father left the boy alone with his mother, who, owing to their increased poverty, became a laundress and tried to get her son to work as well, first in a cloth mill and then in a tobacco factory. But the boy with the perfervid imagination longed to escape from provincial Odense. He dreamed of a different sort of life, a life in the city, pulsating with music and drama and excitement and opportunities for fame and fortune. Impelled by these dreams, he sought out every powerful local magnate and every possible purveyor of assistance in the town, including the bishop. Singing and performing for them all, the fourteen-year-old Andersen was finally rewarded for his persistence when several donors came forth to invest in his future. Having amassed just enough money to get himself as far as the outskirts of Copenhagen, he bid his mother and his grandmother good-bye and in September of 1818 left Odense forever.

In Copenhagen, Andersen studied music with the Italian director of the Royal Choir School and watched opera rehearsals at the Royal Theater; but poverty forced him to live wretchedly in a windowless room in a neighborhood that Wullschlager describes as follows:

> The first thing a provincial newcomer to a slum street like Ulkegade would have noticed was the dreadful stench. There was dung in the streets and dirty water in the canals nearby ... from the market squares round the corner there drifted up the mixed odours of unwrapped meat, soured milk being transported in wooden churns and fish, carried into the city in barrels by fishwives from the coastal villages, and either dried up by the sun or soaking in ice and rainwater.... The wooden butchers' booths around the ruined St. Nicholas Church near Ulkegade were notorious for their smell, the bloody heads and entrails on show, the nearby gutters flowing red. All this in one of the most overcrowded cities in Europe, where large families often lived in one room....

As time went on, Andersen spared no effort to escape this misery by insinuating himself into the life of the upper-middle-class families of Copenhagen.

To win their support and their acceptance, he presented himself as a promising young poet, a gifted singer and actor, "the little shoemaker's son from Odense," and people recognized, despite his gaucherie and his self-dramatization, that he was genuinely talented. He was welcomed into prominent Copenhagen residences, and given dinners and stipends; and although he was often cold and hungry, his feet frozen from the ice that formed on his shabby boots, "[his] desperation to perform, [his] burning ambition, the implacable self-belief—all this stood out from the comedy of Andersen's incongruous exhibitionism and made other people believe in him.... [H]e was looked after." Since his survival in the city depended on the largesse of the wealthy, he had constantly to impress upon them that he was a genius, and Wullschlager argues that this had a lasting effect on his personality: "even after he was famous and secure, his need for constant recognition and praise was pathological, and he craved admiration like a shot of an addictive drug."

Gradually Andersen began to find his voice. His first publication, written at Elsinore in 1826, was a poem called "The Dying Child." Though sentimental to contemporary taste (the poet speaks in the voice of a dying child held in his mother's arms), it appealed to a European public suffering from a staggeringly high rate of infant mortality. Translated quickly into German, in which it was an immense success, and later into French, it crystallizes certain of Andersen's themes. His self-presentation as a child, as well as his doubleness, is made manifest here in the struggle between the wish to survive and the passive desire for surrender and despair: "Mother, I'm so tired, I want to sleep now." The poem stages this battle in terms of the only kind of human relationship, chaste and desexualized, that Andersen ever felt even moderately comfortable pursuing, despite his deep longing for erotic fulfillment.

WULLSCHLAGER NEVER PULLS back from the biographer's duty to interpret, but still there is a mystery at the heart of her book. For she cannot explain how the stories themselves actually came into being. Like magic flowers or beanstalks, they seem to have shot up out of the fertile soil of Andersen's troubled life.

Andersen's first fairy tales appeared some nine years after "The Dying Child." In the interim, he had become enmeshed in an ambiguous and abortive love affair, one of many to follow, that involved a triangle in which he was attracted to both a woman and her brother. The affair ended with his rejection; afterward, he traveled on his own to Italy. Back in Copenhagen, on New Year's Day, 1835, he wrote in a letter: "I am now starting on some 'fairy tales for children.' I am going to win over future generations, you may want to know." Drawing on memories of stories that he had loved as a child, he wrote quickly and in a style "exactly the way I would tell them to a child," as he said a month later. By March the first four tales were already finished, and in May a slender volume of Andersen's fairy tales appeared in print. The book was just sixty-one pages long and contained four tales: "The Tinderbox," "Little Claus and Big Claus," "The Princess and the Pea," and "Little Ida's Flowers." This collection was followed in time for Christmas by a second volume that included, among other stories, "Thumbelina."

How did this happen so suddenly, with such a rapid burst of energy and enthusi-

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asm? Andersen, as we have seen, always seems to have felt ill at ease in adult society—but he felt intimate with the childhood that had both nourished and betrayed him. In resuscitating and reinventing the fairy tale, he may have found "a form in which he could express forbidden emotions and thoughts without, as it were, being caught," as Wullschlager observes. Suddenly, through an astonishing act of matching form with content, all his passion could be fit to a pattern. And once he began to write the tales and to tell them, people listened and delighted in them; and this narrative magic continued throughout his life until, in the summer of 1874, shortly before he died, his inspiration suddenly ended. "No fairy tales occur to me any more," he wrote. "It is as if I had filled out the entire circle with fairy tale radii close to one another. If I walk in the garden among the roses—well, what stories they and the snails have told me! ... In the wood, underneath the old oak trees, I am reminded that the Old Oak Tree has told me its last dream a long time ago. Thus I do not get any new, fresh impulses, and that is sad."

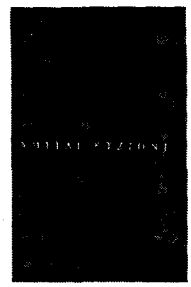
AS ANDERSEN'S TALES were translated ever more widely and his reputation grew, the adulation that he received seemed to nourish his fragility and to spark his creativity. After attending a glittering party at Lord Palmerston's house in London in 1847, he wrote: "The highest of the nobility were there.... I was presented to one lady after the other. Each one knew almost all of my writings. The hereditary grand duchess introduced me to the duchess of Suffolk.... They say that Dickens and D'Israeli are excluded from these circles; they acknowledged me, they accepted me.... English ladies overwhelmed me with enthusiasm for 'The Ugly Duckling.'"

He traveled compulsively, seeking in his journeys what Wullschlager calls "a palliative against depression": for weeks and months at a time he stayed at country estates where, cosseted and fed, he was provided with the security that enabled him to write. His life hovered precariously between the effervescent surreal and the despondent real, between extremes of ecstasy and despair. As he wrote in his travel diary in 1841, from Rome: "How lonely I am.... Every now and then I even think it might be a good thing if I were killed.... I have nothing to live for any more.... My need to be noticed is so great that the idea of sudden death intrigues me." The other extreme can be found during a visit to Weimar: "the evenings passed like a spiritual dream.... Sunshine has streamed forth from Weimar upon my poet-life."

In Wullschlager's book, Andersen himself, glimpsed and heard through his diaries, letters, and autobiographies, as well as through the portrait drawings, the paintings, and the photographs that are sprinkled liberally throughout, emerges as a character as memorable and touching, as bizarre but somehow familiar, as any of the fictional personae that he created in his tales. While reading this telling of the story of the teller of stories, one senses a kind of failure of connection, a constant pain (like the toothache of which Andersen frequently complained). He was rarely at peace. "As soon as he was alone for a few hours," Wullschlager writes, "restlessness and resentment surfaced."

THIS MISERY WAS the deep ground of his genius. It is the source of the profoundest grief in the story of the little match girl, which I find the most painful of all his stories of unhappiness. In the biting weather of the last evening of the year, a shivering little girl, her naked feet red and blue with cold, wanders the streets of Copenhagen, trying in vain to sell matches. Through the shining windows of the houses of the rich, she glimpses holiday ornaments and smells roasted goose. The falling snow covers her hair as, numb with cold, she crouches in an alley between two houses and lights her matches, one by one, trying to keep warm. With the glow of each flame an image arises that illuminates for an instant the thick, damp wall that shelters her. She imagines a polished brass stove, a snow-white tablecloth with a glorious goose stuffed with apples and plums, a Christmas tree with thousands of candles on its green boughs.

Finally she sees a falling star and envisions her beloved grandmother, who once told her that when a star falls someone dies. Realizing how quickly the images disappear when the matches go out, she kindles all the remaining matches at once to hold on to the image of her grandmother. Beholding her then in a magnificent blaze of light, the little girl calls out to her and begs her to take her away before the light vanishes. The next morning, as the sun rises on the first day of the new year, a small corpse is found stiff against the wall, frozen to death, with a burnt bundle of matches. "'She wanted to warm herself,' the people said. No one imagined what a beautiful thing she had seen, and in what glory she had gone with her grandmother in to the New Year's Day." The story is less than four pages long, but it epitomizes all that Andersen understood about the gap between desire and truth. In it, he honored the rough matter of his own earliest childhood, brought it through fire, and cut it into a gem.



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Andersen's repeated failure to choose a lasting human intimacy, and the solitary struggle that he fought against abandonment and death, may have been what gave him the capacity to live so deeply within the recesses of his own fantasies. In not sharing himself fully with any one person, he was impelled to share himself with all. Missing out on the joys of being looked at deeply and touched and loved best of all, he evaded a certain kind of responsibility, too, just as he did by never making a real home for himself. We might say that the tales themselves became the locus of his habitation; the writing itself, his responsibility; and the ever-present fear of madness, the price he had to pay for that degree of alienation.

For Andersen, in his own time, lived on an edge. Despite his aristocratic patronage and the external bourgeois trappings that he struggled so tenaciously to acquire, he dwelled in a world of liminal phenomena: flowers that danced, an evergreen tree that dreamed of a more grandiose life, a girl so tiny she could sleep in a walnut shell, a crow who wondered if a cage with a pension might be preferable to flying about free in the sky, a darning needle who thought she was an embroidery needle, a mermaid who was willing to have her tongue cut out of her mouth and to walk on knives in order to be near her prince.

He was an artist who, above all, eschewed explanation in favor of narration. When Andersen tells us a story about a snowman who falls in love with a stove, he wants us not to dwell on the oddity of the situation, but to feel the profound sadness of the impossible love, the agony of the ungratifiable desire. More than any other writer, he is the figure who can teach us why—as D.W. Winnicott cautioned nearly a century later—when we encounter the make-believe world of childhood, we must never pose the question: "Did you make or did you find this?" To do so is to fail to see that the answer is always both. ■

The Virginians

By ALAN TAYLOR

Big Chief Elizabeth: The Adventures and Fate of the First English Colonists in America by Giles Milton

(Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 358 pp., $24)

DURING THE 1580S, Queen Elizabeth I ruled a relatively small and poor kingdom. England lagged far behind Spain, which had surged to wealth and power by developing the first trans-oceanic empire, conquering and exploiting the Indian peoples of the Caribbean, Mexico, Central America, and Peru. American gold and silver enabled the Spanish emperor to build the largest army and navy in Europe. Intimidated or alarmed, the other Europeans felt compelled to seek their own share of the American riches. From the Spanish example the English courtier Sir Walter Ralegh concluded that "hee that commaunds the sea commaunds the trade and hee that is lord of the trade of the world is lord of the wealthe of the world."

The quickest way to obtain American wealth was to steal it on the high seas, after the Spanish had conveniently mined the gold and silver and loaded it onto ships. Lacking a substantial navy, the impecunious English queen covertly encouraged private investors—a mix of ambitious aristocrats and London merchants—to send armed ships to attack and to plunder the Spanish ships homeward bound from the Caribbean. But piracy was a hit-or-miss proposition. Ralegh understood that to secure a steadier flow of enriching overseas commerce, England needed its own American colony. In the short term, such a colony could serve as a base for the English pirates. In the long term, the ideal colony would provide mines of precious metals and plantations of hot-climate crops—sugar, cacao, and tobacco—that commanded high prices because they could not thrive in cool and damp England.

In search of such a colony, Ralegh financed voyages that probed the Atlantic seaboard of eastern North America. In honor of their queen's virginity, the English named the entire coast between Florida and Canada "Virginia." They found Virginia unoccupied by the Spanish, who had their hands full managing the vast lands, the many peoples, and the rich mines to the south in Mexico and Peru. Disliking piratical and heretical neighbors, the Catholic Spanish vowed to destroy any Protestant English colony.

RALEGH'S COLONIAL VENTURE was, like second marriages, a triumph of hope over experience. Previous English bids at American colonization had failed miserably. In 1583, Ralegh's hot-tempered half-brother Sir Humphrey Gilbert organized an expedition of five ships bearing two hundred sixty men to colonize some spot along the vast shoreline of Virginia. Sailing first to Newfoundland, Gilbert lost his main supply ship to a storm. Compelled to sail for home, Gilbert's vessel foundered, with all hands, in the North Atlantic.

Upon Gilbert's death, the queen's charter to colonize Virginia passed to Ralegh. Despite his birth into a Devonshire family of genteel poverty, Ralegh had risen spectacularly in wealth and influence by banking upon his dazzling charm and quick wit. Gifted at flattery and self-promotion, Ralegh caught the queen's attention and won her affections. Handsome and dapper, Ralegh eclipsed in appearance the other ambitious courtiers who clustered around the monarch. Middle-aged and trapped in a public virginity, the queen delighted in flattering flirtation with handsome and intelligent younger men. No one played the game better than Ralegh, who wrote sonnets likening Elizabeth to the goddesses of antiquity.

For his charms and pains, Ralegh reaped royal favor in the form of lucrative monopolies, important offices, and rambling mansions. No one in England could sell wine or woolen broadcloth without paying for Ralegh's license. Appointed to command the queen's bodyguard, Ralegh enjoyed unmatched access to Elizabeth and her patronage. Less successful but higher-born courtiers seethed at Ralegh's extraordinary success and influence, while common people resented the higher cost of their clothing. A rival denounced Ralegh as "the best hated man of the world."

Ralegh devoted some of his new wealth to his Virginia schemes. In London, he attracted and patronized a talented coterie of experts, principally the young polymath Thomas Harriot, an adept mathematician, linguist, and ethnographer. In 1584, Ralegh and Harriot sent two ships, com-

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manded by Philip Amadas and Arthur Barlowe, across the Atlantic to explore the American coast for a suitable site to colonize. They chose Roanoke, an island nestled within the Pamlico Sound formed by North Carolina's Outer Banks, a long and treacherous set of sandbanks. Impressed by the security that the Outer Banks promised against Spanish attack, Amadas and Barlowe overlooked how difficult it would be for English ships to reach Roanoke with supplies. They also overestimated the fertility of the soil, calling it "the most plentiful, sweet, fruitful, and wholesome of all the world." Better yet, wishful thinking led them to report docile, welcoming Indians: "We found the people most gentle, loving and faithfull, void of all guile and treason, and such as lived after the manner of the golden age." But the English possessed plenty of guile, luring aboard ship two young Indian men named Manteo and Wanchese. Taken to London, Manteo and Wanchese taught Harriot their complex Algonquian language and afforded insights into the lands and the peoples of Virginia.

In 1585, Ralegh prepared a second, larger expedition to colonize Roanoke Island. The queen lent him one ship and a supply of gunpowder, while Ralegh and other private investors footed most of the bills. Command belonged to Sir Richard Grenville, a fiery and showy martinet. An acquaintance noted that "he was of so hard a complection [that] he would carouse three or four glasses of wine, and in a braverie take the glasses betweene his teeth and crash them in peeces and swallow them downe, so that oftentimes the blood ran out of his mouth." His assistants included Simon Fernandez, an able but quarrelsome Portuguese navigator; Ralph Lane, a hardened veteran of England's brutal conquest of Ireland; and John White, a skilled mapmaker and artist; as well as Harriot, Manteo, and Wanchese, who served as interpreters. Ralegh remained in England to tend to the doting queen.

The voyagers quickly discovered the folly of Roanoke as a site for colonization. Frequent storms trapped wooden ships against the treacherous Outer Banks, which became a graveyard for growing numbers of sailors, anchors, and vessels. One gale breached the lead ship, spoiling most of the provisions on board—provisions needed to sustain the colonists through the year until their first harvest the following summer. The disaster rendered the colonists dependent upon supplies of corn, beans, squash, and venison wheedled from the various native bands dwelling around Pamlico Sound. The demanding colonists put to the test the assurances of Amadas and Barlowe that the Indians were meek and generous innocents.

When frustrated in this fantasy, English commanders became enraged and certain of their superiority in both virtue and weapons. After visiting one Indian village in force, Grenville missed his cherished silver drinking cup. Blaming Indian theft, Grenville returned to teach them the favorite lesson of imperialists: their power to punish whatever frustrated their will. He burned the entire village and trampled its growing crops, threatening the inhabitants with starvation. This was hardly the smartest move for a small band of intruders who needed the goodwill and the food of the much larger native population. Grenville could care less, for he sailed away in August, leaving Ralph Lane behind to govern the colonists and to bully the Indians.

The Indians were also shocked and intimidated by new diseases unwittingly introduced by the newcomers bearing the more virulent pathogens of Europe. Harriot reported that "within a few dayes after our departure from everie such [Indian] towne, the people began to die very fast, and many in [a] short space." The "disease was so strange that they neither knew what it was, nor how to cure it." Both the English and the Indians attributed the deadly epidemic to supernatural power. The English credited their God, who, they said, favored their new colony. The Indians suspected magic exercised by the colonists to (in Harriot's words) "kill and slaie whom wee would without weapons." Many Indians sought to know, to deflect, and to capture that magical power by attending the colonists' religious services to repeat their prayers and sing their psalms.

By spring, however, Roanoke's nearest chieftain, Wingina, ran out of patience. Disease continued to kill his people, and the English continued to demand food long after the Indians had exhausted their harvest from the previous fall. Seeking security in distance, Wingina withdrew his people from Roanoke Island and resettled them on the mainland, where he negotiated alliances with other native peoples who shared his anxiety over the aggressive newcomers. Governor Lane interpreted Wingina's moves as treachery. Drawing upon past experience brutalizing Irish rebels, Lane prepared a preemptive strike.

Pretending that he sought a peaceful parley, Lane entered Wingina's village on June 1, 1586. Suddenly the English opened fire, killing all of Wingina's subordinate chiefs. Dodging the first volley, Wingina bolted into the woods, with two of Lane's men in hot pursuit. To the governor's relief, his men soon returned carrying Wingina's bloody head. An apparent victory, Lane's attack doomed his settlement by confirming the hostility of the many other Indian villages scattered around the sound and along the rivers.

A few weeks later the fortuitous arrival of Sir Francis Drake's English flotilla enabled Lane and the colonists to abandon Roanoke and to return home. In their hasty departure, sailors threw overboard most of the precious samples, maps, drawings, and notebooks so painstakingly collected and kept by White and Harriot in the previous year. The hasty also forgot, and left behind, three laggard colonists—the first of the "lost colonists." To find space for the embarked colonists and (some of) their baggage, Drake jettisoned about three hundred African and Indian slaves that he had gathered in his raids on the Spanish Caribbean. Marooned on a strange shore, they starved to death or survived by incorporation in local Indian peoples: no one knows, for the English did not care. Later that summer Grenville stopped by with reinforcements, only to discover Roanoke abandoned. To keep the fort in repair, he left fifteen soldiers when he sailed on.

In 1587, Ralegh dispatched a new colonial expedition that applied the lessons of Lane's failure. In contrast to Lane's bellicose men, the new colonists comprised a core group of families that included seventeen women and nine children. Less threatening to the natives, familial colonists would also better develop self-supporting farms. Instead of the military Lane, the new governor was the civilian John White. Best of all, Ralegh forsook Roanoke in favor of the Chesapeake Bay, which offered more fertile land beside an array of navigable rivers and deep-water harbors.

But the best-laid plans ran afoul of the expedition's navigator Simon Fernandez, who unceremoniously dumped the colonists ashore at Roanoke so that he could quickly get on with the more profitable business of attacking Spanish ships. The colonists found themselves amid natives alienated by bad treatment in the past. The fifteen soldiers had all vanished, except for one skeleton whose owner had evidently been slain by the Indians. The fate of the rest was as uncertain as that of the three colonists forgotten in 1586 (or the three hundred slaves marooned that year). Soon the Indians killed one of White's men. Belatedly adopting Lane's approach, but lacking his brutal skills, White mistakenly attacked the only Indians who were still friendly. After that, White felt a desperate need for more

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reinforcements and supplies from England. He departed for England to plead the cause of the colonists that he had left behind. They included his married daughter Eleanore Dare and a newborn granddaughter named Virginia Dare.

White found England preoccupied with fending off attack by a massive Spanish fleet: the Armada. Although eventually victorious, the English could spare neither ships nor supplies for Roanoke until 1590, when White returned to find the settlement abandoned. The lone clue was carved into a tree: the word "Croatoan," the name of a nearby island. But the mariners refused to test the treacherous waters to investigate Croatoan, sailing away with a dismayed and grieving John White. Their departure rendered lost the latest set of colonists (the third, if you're keeping score).

UNDER THE TERMS of his charter, Ralegh risked losing Virginia if it remained unoccupied by colonists for seven years. He needed to find his lost colonists, or at least to pretend that they remained alive. Pretending was easier and cheaper than finding, especially after Ralegh suddenly fell out of royal grace and deep into debt in 1592. Grown complacent with royal favor and weary of unconsummated love talk with an aging queen, Ralegh covertly impregnated and married one of the queen's maids of honor—a double betrayal in the eyes of a possessive monarch. Discovering their secret, she imprisoned both Raleghs, man and wife, in the Tower of London.

Ralegh vainly sought an early escape by reviving his mawkish flattery: he longed to "behold [the queen] riding like Alexander, hunting like Diana, walking like Venus, the gentle wind blowing her fair hair about her pure cheeks, like a nymph; sometime sitting in the shade like a goddess, sometime singing like an angel, sometime playing like Orpheus." At last, after four months, the queen partially relented, freeing the couple but barring them from her court and offices. Far worse followed in 1603, when Elizabeth died and was succeeded by a distant relative, who ruled as James I. A coarse and frugal man, the new king despised the charming and profligate Ralegh. Accused of treason and convicted in a fixed trial, Ralegh suddenly waxed popular as the victim of the unpopular new king. Although James stayed his execution to avoid creating a popular martyr, Ralegh remained imprisoned in the Tower for another decade.

King James transferred the Virginia charter into new hands, the London merchants known as the Virginia Company. In early 1607, they sent across the Atlantic about one hundred colonists in three ships. This time the navigator, Christopher Newport, dutifully sailed to the Chesapeake to establish a new settlement, named Jamestown, on a river called James, both in honor of the new monarch. Although more fertile and accessible than Roanoke, Jamestown compensated with its own flaws, such as the surrounding swamps that supplied the colony with fetid drinking water and millions of malaria-bearing mosquitoes. Sapped of energy, the colonists failed to exert themselves as farmers. As supplies ran low, they counted on extorting provisions from the Indians.

Unfortunately for the English, the Chesapeake natives were even more numerous and better organized than their Roanoke kin. Powhatan, the Chesapeake's paramount chief, had secured command of about thirty small tribes, a total of twenty-four thousand Indians. Shrewd and ruthless, Powhatan responded to force with force, usually keeping the English cooped up in their swampy settlement, where mosquitoes, foul water, starvation, and infighting took a grim toll. During the first year, a colonial officer named George Percy heard the "men, night and day, groaning in every corner of the fort, most pittifull to hear." A coup sacked the colony's first governor when he hoarded a roasted squirrel.

Conditions temporarily improved during the second year, thanks to the blustering but effective leadership of Captain John Smith, who compelled his men to perform more work and the Indians to give more food. Upon Smith's return to England in 1609, colonial indolence and Indian hostility increased, with deadly consequences. During the winter of 1609–1610, the starving colonists boiled and ate their shoes. A few exhumed and consumed their newly dead comrades. One man even killed and devoured his wife. By spring, only sixty of the fall's five hundred colonists remained alive.

The haggard survivors abandoned Jamestown, but downriver they were intercepted by a new governor, Lord De La Warr, arriving by sea with reinforcements. De La Warr compelled the reoccupation of Jamestown and adopted a genocidal policy of raiding Powhatan's villages to massacre men, women, and children. The grim war persisted until 1613, when the English captured Powhatan's favorite daughter, the teenaged Pocahontas. Held in Jamestown, she accepted English ways, including an English husband, marrying John Rolfe, and taking the Christian name Rebecca in 1614. Weary of war and eager to see his daughter again, Powhatan wishfully interpreted the marriage as the sealing of an alliance of equals.

In 1616, to celebrate the new peace, the Virginia Company brought John and Rebecca Rolfe to England for a promotional tour. On display, their marriage and their newborn son suggested a new era of inter-racial peace and harmony, which affords Giles Milton a conveniently happy ending to his hitherto sordid tale: "With no more need for warfare or bloodshed, the search could once again begin for the lost colonists of Roanoke." Happy, but misleading. Exposed to new diseases, Rebecca/Pocahontas died in 1617 at the age of twenty-one. Powhatan expired a year later, and his authority passed to his half-brother Opechancanough, whom Milton miscasts as a peacemaker.

A boom in tobacco cultivation, initiated by John Rolfe, rendered Virginia profitable and newly attractive, drawing hundreds of emigrants who invaded Indian lands. Outraged, Opechancanough led a surprise uprising in 1622 that killed three hundred forty-seven men, women, and children, nearly one-third of the Virginia colonists. In grim retribution, the English destroyed Indian crops and towns and slaughtered the inhabitants. In 1623, the starving survivors entered peace negotiations, but the English poisoned their alcohol; incapacitated, the two hundred fifty Indians at the parley were easily finished off by English swords.

From a population of twenty-four thousand in the Virginia lowlands in 1607, the natives dwindled to just two thousand in 1669. The survivors occupied small reservations within a Virginia landscape dominated and transformed by a colonial population that surged to forty-one thousand by 1670. Far from peace and racial harmony, seventeenth-century Virginia brought a systematic depopulation and dispossession to the native peoples, as well as massive losses of colonial life to disease—and the introduction of thousands of African slaves at century's end. Milton should have recognized that his story was a tragedy of deadly exploitation.

AFTER PREMATURELY concluding his narrative on an upbeat note, Milton appends an epilogue that returns to the mystery of those lost Roanoke colonists, especially the approximately one hundred people left behind by John White in 1587. He reveals that by late 1608 the Jamestown colonists had learned from Indian informants that a community of English people had long taken refuge in an Indian village that defied Powhatan's rule. Apparently, they had been wiped out in early 1607 when Powhatan's warriors destroyed that village, which was located on the lower reaches of the Chesapeake Bay.

By belatedly revealing this discovery of

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1608 in the epilogue to his book, Milton arbitrarily keeps alive the suspense of his previous two chapters, in which he unfairly criticizes the Jamestown governors of 1609–1616 for doing so little to find the lost colonists. If they knew the lost colonists to be dead, why should they have been looking? Milton also employs sleight of hand in accounting for how the tale became known. He insists that Powhatan first confessed the truth to Captain John Smith, who dared not reveal it to his countrymen: "Smith knew that news of the slaughter had to be kept secret, since it was certain to prove deeply embarrassing to King James. He, after all, was still celebrating the fact that he now had a vassal king in America. If news leaked out that Powhatan was actually a mass murderer, James would be a laughingstock of England." This is utter nonsense. Like any seventeenth-century ruler, King James was very familiar with terror and massacre as instruments of state; he dealt regularly with warlords who had done in Ireland what Powhatan did in Virginia. Nor did his public expect better.

And the story of the destroyed lost colonists *was* published in England during the king's reign, but not by Smith. Although Milton masks the fact, the story appeared in print in England in 1612 in a conspicuous book by William Strachey, an official of the Virginia company. Although eager to remain in the king's good graces, neither Strachey nor his company felt that they were embarrassing James in the slightest. Nor did the king take affront. So why would Smith have censored himself on a story that had already been prominently and safely published?

In fact, Smith never claimed in his own writings that Powhatan revealed the secret to him. Not until 1625 did another writer, Samuel Purchas, insist that Powhatan had so confessed to the captain. Purchas published after the bloody uprising of 1622, which encouraged reviving the lost-colony atrocity story and tracing it by anecdote directly to Powhatan's lips. Of course, Milton could not reveal Purchas's role and motive without mentioning the bloodshed of 1622, which he left out of his own book by choosing a happy ending in 1616.

AN ENGLISH AUTHOR of popular history, Giles Milton musters an array of amusing anecdotes (some of them true) and many striking quotations (mostly accurate). His vivid style renders into neon already colorful characters and dramatic action. His Queen Elizabeth "swore like a trooper, picked her teeth with a gold toothpick, and delighted in coarse jokes." Captain John Smith's "head was crowned with a shock of red hair, and his face was so covered in beard and whiskers that he looked more like an animal than a man." Aboard one of Drake's ships an unfortunate steward "was caught with his hose around his ankles and two young lads in his bunk."

That Elizabethan men wore codpieces is a matter of special and recurring fascination to Milton. A courtier named Robert Dudley "had come within a codpiece of depriving the Virgin Queen of her much-vaunted epithet." As for King James, "when he was nervous, he had an alarming habit of fiddling with his codpiece." Liking his joke so much, Milton later repeats it. When popular opinion rallied to the convicted Ralegh, King James, "after fiddling with his codpiece, heeded the popular sentiment." Milton's breezy style quickly suffers from repetition, and grows tiresome.

Turning a clever phrase and framing a graphic image often trump the evidence. Determined to caricature King James I (admittedly a tempting target), Milton reports as fact the malicious inventions of the monarch's enemies. "He was so malcoordinated at table that it was said to be possible to identify every meal he had eaten for seven years by studying the scraps of dried food stuck to his clothes." When Rebecca/Pocahontas called on the

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king, she found, Milton asserts, "a dirty and rather disheveled fifty-year-old with food in his beard and stains on his waistcoat." Slanderous exaggeration was the stock-in-trade of disappointed courtiers; and amplified (rather than analyzed) by Milton, it becomes the gist of his tale.

Milton seems as lost as the colonists in weighing the strengths and the weaknesses of his highly partisan and often incomplete sources. Judging from his appended bibliography, to interpret the evidence Milton relied on a mix of other popular histories and the English scholarship of past generations. He avoided more current and more accomplished works, particularly by American scholars on the Indians during the initial encounters with the colonizers. Informed by anthropology, recent historians have partially recovered the complexities of native culture, which belie the Indians' stereotyping as primitives dwelling in an untouched wilderness.

Milton's superficial understanding of Indian culture proves especially distorting in his recounting of the fabled story of Pocahontas rescuing Captain John Smith from an execution ordered by her father Powhatan in 1607. Following Smith's self-promoting account, Milton insists that Powhatan was so stunned by the spontaneous and chivalrous act of his daughter that he abruptly reversed course, saving the captain and adopting him as a kinsman. Scholars of Algonquian culture more plausibly interpret the mock execution as a carefully scripted adoption ceremony, from beginning to end. Paralleling Powhatan's similar treatment of conquered Indian chiefs, the ritual was meant to subordinate Smith and his colonists to the rule of the paramount chief. Misunderstanding the terms of his consent, Smith returned to Jamestown and his bullying ways. Milton can see the policy behind the colonists' subsequent coronation ceremony giving Powhatan an English-made crown of copper, the better to claim that he was tributary to King James. Yet Milton cannot recognize that Indians had their own policies of power and rituals of subordination—or that an eleven-year-old girl almost certainly did as her father told.

Despite his shallow understanding of native culture, Milton claims an uncanny ability to read the minds of particular Indians. Powhatan "was so shaken by the doom-laden prophecies of his elders that he decided that [Captain John] Smith would be safer dead than alive." But his daughter Pocahontas wanted Smith to live because "she found herself captivated by the English settlers and their magical array of tools and instruments and wished to learn more about their strange ways." In both cases, Milton's imagination ranges far beyond his sources into a fantasy that implausibly contrasts the motives of father and daughter. In fact, Pocahontas did her father's bidding because they both wished, by hook or by crook, to obtain a share in the dangerous technology of their invaders.

Oblivious to current scholarship, Milton instead echoes the worldview of Kipling's day, casting his tale as a struggle between English "civilization" and Indian "savagery." On the one hand, he dismisses as promotional bunkum any reports that emphasized the humanity and the civility of the natives: "Their hardest task was to present the Indian population in a positive light." On the other hand, Milton endorses every account that depicts Indians as alien, primitive, and repellent. Adopting the imperial gaze, Milton writes: "The old men looked so bizarre that even Harriot could scarcely conceal his sniggers.... The women looked even more extraordinary. They were strongly boned and had partially exposed breasts, and might have been considered attractive had it not been for their razored heads and tattooed cheeks." Harriot, "for one, was never going to share his eiderdown with a shaven-headed maiden." Manteo serves as Milton's exception to prove the savage rule: "For the first time, England had forged an Indian in its own image, a tattooed and shaven-headed tribesman who was now so civilised that he would salute the flag of St. George. He spoke English, wore breeches and a doublet, and had even rejected his panoply of gods and devils." Rather than investigate native spirituality, Milton mocks it, referring to "a native population whose interest in the Bible had so far been limited to stroking their bellies with its vellum jacket."

Unlike more recent and appreciative scholars, Milton deprecates the native culture as primitive and even absurd. The Algonquian name for a chief, *weroance*, was in Milton's view "both barbarous and slightly comical." And Powhatan's council house "was nothing to write home about; constructed from branches and twigs, it was little more than a large wooden shack." No reader will discover from Milton that Indian housing was more efficient—quicker to build and warmer to live in—than the clunky and costly structures of the English. Nor does he note that the Indians' more productive methods of horticulture and fishing enabled them to subsist—unlike their unwanted and obtuse guests, who so abjectly failed to support themselves in a new land.

The imperial gaze often leads Milton to endorse the imperial myth that the invaders were the innocent victims of savage cruelty. He describes the Roanoke woods as "home to a growing band of vengeful and warlike tribesmen." Milton fundamentally blames their chief for the worsening relations: "a capricious individual," Wingina kept "busy making mischief" for the English, eventually provoking Ralph Lane's righteous revenge. But the only evidence for Wingina's treachery comes from Lane's self-serving account; the fairer Thomas Harriot felt that his commander over-reacted. Given that Lane pretended a parley in order to surprise and to butcher Wingina and his subordinate chiefs, treachery at Roanoke seems to have been more English than Indian.

Although almost all of the violent

The Boy in the Wheelchair

While I am walking down the hall
talking to my friends
Walter rumbles up behind
and slams me in the rear end.

My books go flying in the air
and I crumple to the ground
while Walter laughs and points at me
before he roars around

my body twitching on the floor,
taking special care
to crush my outstretched fingers
as he rolls past in his chair.

He's broken Betty Thompson's leg
and Harold Snyder's knees
and put half of the football team
out with injuries.

Each night when I'm alone in bed
I pray to God and beg
that Walter will be healed and walk
so I can break his legs.

Andrew Hudgins

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deaths in 1586 were Indians slain by the English, Milton mischaracterizes the Roanoke Indians as "neighbours who showed an alarming propensity for murder and bloodshed." No pacifists, the Indians were certainly human in their capacity for violence and cruelty—but Milton distorts by suggesting that they were innately less trustworthy and more brutal than their invaders. We need not romanticize the Indians to recognize that they suffered far more than they inflicted in the exchange of bloodshed and destruction.

IN THE PAGES of *Big Chief Elizabeth*, the Indians remain inscrutable in their violence because Milton fails to investigate their cultural context and recent experiences. In 1607, Captain Newport's expedition reached the Chesapeake only to experience an "unprovoked ambush" by Indian archers. Milton does not explain that for decades European mariners had periodically visited the Chesapeake, occasionally killing or kidnapping natives. By 1607 the Algonquians had plenty of provocation to drive away new intruders.

Given his understanding of Indians as fickle, remorseless, and brutal, Milton evaluates colonial leadership in terms of machismo. According to Milton, the militarist Lane knew how to handle Indians: "Bold, decisive, and supremely confident, he marched a phalanx of forty soldiers into the village and seized the chieftain." By contrast, Milton derides White as a weakling for first attempting a diplomatic solution when the Indians killed one of his colonists. Where the sword-happy Lane gets the benefit of the doubt, the more cautious White receives a double dose of authorial contempt for departing from Roanoke. After depicting the governor as compelled to leave by colonists wearied by his weakness, Milton contradicts himself by insisting that "at a critical juncture in the fortunes of the colony—and with hostile forces gathering apace—White had voluntarily abnegated his responsibilities." A fairer assessment of the two governors would find White tragically overmatched at Roanoke by a mess largely of Lane's creation: the brutal and unprovoked murder of Wingina and his subchiefs the year before.

In assessing the subsequent leaders of Jamestown, Milton similarly prefers the bellicose to the pacific. In 1608, Christopher Newport secured a desperately needed interlude of peace and food supplies by offering in trade what Powhatan wanted most: metal tools and weapons. Despite the trade's substantial benefits for the beleaguered colonists, Milton derides Newport's "foolish policy" for diminishing a military advantage. Milton prefers Newport's confrontational successors, especially Sir Thomas Dale, whose "brutally effective leadership had shaken Jamestown out of its torpor.... The tribes nearest to the settlement had been all but neutralised and the threat of violence had subdued even the belligerent Powhatan—at least for the time being."

Downplaying moments of intercultural exchange and diplomacy, Milton instead highlights Indian violence, dwelling upon long and gruesome descriptions of Indians torturing and massacring the helpless English. When the historical record proves insufficiently lurid, Milton imagines an even bloodier scene of helpless English people victimized by relentless savages. Imagining the last day for the largest set of lost colonists, Milton insists that

> the onslaught, when it came, probably followed a depressingly familiar pattern.... The ambush must have come without any warning: a hail of arrows, a scream from the forest, and a ferocious and terrifying assault. The Indians would have formed themselves into small bands whose task was to single out the toughest of the English. These poor victims would have been seized and bound before the tribesmen "beat out their braynes" with wooden cudgels. Only when the strongest men had been slaughtered would they have turned their attentions to the weak, the sick, the women and children. Some, perhaps, were "broyled to death"—slowly burned on a bed of charcoal. Others would have been stripped and flayed alive. Only the fortunate would have been killed in the initial onslaught on the village.

Designed to complete the reader's identification with the English and alienation from the Indians, this graphic fantasy reveals far more about Milton than about the tragic mystery of the lost colonists. A fuller and fairer understanding of native culture renders much of Milton's scenario implausible. While torturing and executing captured men, the Indians preferred to adopt and assimilate women and children. As killers, they were more discriminating than the English, who mastered in Ireland and exported to America the intimidating massacre of entire towns.

Milton's ethnocentric lapses are all the more jarring because he sometimes adopts a more reflective and judicious tone. Contradicting his former praise of Lane's militarism at Roanoke, Milton later observes that "the settlers' brutal treatment of the Indians had been an act of incalculable folly. Only when it was too late did the English realise that their colony was doomed to fail without the active support of the native tribesmen." Such passages suggest that Milton's delight in clever and graphic prose betrayed his wiser and more humane judgment as a historian.

I intend no blanket rejection of popular history, which can do a world of good. Readers need history rendered accessible. Heaven knows, academic historians could pay more attention to their literary skills. And independent scholars such as Giles Milton can produce gripping works of history that are honest and profound. The problem comes when a pop historian casts adrift from the creative tension with evidence that gives history its mystery and its depth. Why not imagine that colorful effect and scrupulous investigation can be kept in tandem, serving each other? ■

CORRESPONDENCE

continued from page 6

be on the commission—especially without paying dues to the club.

RAINER LOHMANN
Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering
Massachusetts Institute of Technology
Cambridge, Massachusetts

Shocked

TO THE EDITORS:

I was shocked by your statement that California power producers have driven up prices (Notebook, May 21). This issue has been repeatedly investigated by both federal and California government representatives, and nothing illegal has been found. As to the argument that price controls will create sufficient supply, there is no evidence in economic theory or historical experience to suggest that is so, particularly when the raw-material costs are a free-market commodity. The real problem is that California's price controls on distributors, together with "not in my backyard" barriers on infrastructure, have eliminated all incentive and capacity to increase supply, while allowing demand to grow in an uninhibited manner. When demand exceeds supply, prices rise—and the only solution is to provide an incentive to increase supply, which requires an adequate return on capital. The rest of the United States operate this way without a problem. So should California.

THOMAS WHITE
White Plains, New York

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WASHINGTON DIARIST

Getting It

WHEN I WAS A REporter in Boston, a well-known officeholder once explained to me his guiding theory of politics: "Fuck with me," he said, "and you will die." Jabbing a fork at me over his plate of spaghetti, he proceeded to express his admiration for the medieval practice of severing the head of a vanquished enemy, mounting it on a stake, and riding with it on horseback through town. He intended something similar, in political terms, for a certain rival. Until then I hadn't realized that politicians really talked that way. Before meeting him, I had examined this man's voting record, speeches, and ideology. Now all of that seemed a waste of time.

THERE'S A PASSAGE IN GRAHAM Greene's novel *The Quiet American* that describes moments like that. The book is set in 1950s Saigon, where the journalist Fowler visits a slum in search of clues about a terrorist bombing. Examining the clutter of an eerie old warehouse, he grumbles to himself about a pompous editorialist, steeped in political theory, who never saw the human reality behind it all. "York Harding might write in graphic abstractions about the Third Force," he thought, "but this was what it came down to—this was It."

PERHAPS GREENE SPENT TIME IN Boston, a city whose gothic political arena can only be understood through this kind of primal, subterranean "It." Boston is a town where the man who ruled the state Senate for 17 years also happened to be the brother of a reputed mobster named "Whitey," who appears on the FBI's "Most Wanted" list and who also happened to win, with three friends, a $14 million state lottery jackpot ten years ago. No graphic abstractions could explain that.

THIS CITY'S SUBTERFUGE AND BRUtality has a way of shocking the uninitiated. Even Kennedys can be taken by surprise. Their latest political offering, Maxwell, the 36-year-old son of RFK and nephew of Teddy, this week formally called off his campaign to replace legendary South Boston Representative Joe Moakley after a savage hazing by the Boston media. The press mocked the humiliating, stuttering speech in which Kennedy introduced himself to the public. "It was one of those times when you want to close your eyes," *The Boston Globe* quoted one supporter as saying. Then the *Boston Herald* disclosed the existence of a tape purportedly showing Kennedy in the Dickensian act of kicking a dog. (Turns out he was breaking up a dogfight.) Soon after, the *Herald* reported that Max had been arrested nearly 20 years earlier for assaulting a Harvard campus police officer. Worse, Max had been out cavorting with his cousin Michael Skakel, who is now facing trial for a mysterious 1975 killing in Greenwich, Connecticut—thus allowing the papers to put the words "Max Kennedy," "assault," and "murder" in the same sentence.

FOUR YEARS EARLIER, THE *GLOBE* had broken the news, on the front page, that Michael Kennedy was having an affair with his baby-sitter, a revelation that basically hounded his brother Joe Kennedy out of the gubernatorial race. Such Kennedy-savaging may come as a surprise to those who still assume that the *Globe* is a kind of Hyannis Port *Pravda*. And it certainly used to be. In 1962 the paper blandly headlined the news that Ted Kennedy had been kicked out of Harvard for cheating: "TED KENNEDY TELLS ABOUT HARVARD EXAMINATION INCIDENT." Today, the Boston media considers mercilessness an equal-opportunity sport. No candidate is safe from what locals call "dime-drops" (into pay phones)—leaking scurrilous stories to the press. "No fingerprints," one habitual dime-dropper used to instruct with each furtive call.

THE IRONY OF MAX'S COLLAPSE, HOWever, is that it doesn't take a lot of polish to be a Massachusetts congressman. Michael Capuano, the combative mayor of working-class Somerville who replaced Joe Kennedy as the Eighth District's representative in 1998, on live television declared his victory to be "pretty goddamned unbelievable." On subsequent occasions, Capuano told me that he couldn't pronounce Kosovo, referred to Khazakstan as "Khazakfuck," and confided that, although he couldn't go on junkets as a freshman member of Congress, "I gotta get one reelection, and then I can go wherever I want." A chagrined Moakley, I later heard, reflected that "your constituents don't want you to be smarter than them. But they don't want you to be dumber, either." Nonetheless, Capuano has prospered.

MOAKLEY, WHO DIED OF LEUKEMIA two weeks ago, was no genius either—but he never pretended to be. And while he was never being ashamed of what politics really entailed, he managed to play the game without kicking dogs or metaphorically severing opponents' heads. I learned this when I interviewed him four years ago at his waterfront office in South Boston, where huge picture windows displayed Boston Harbor and the downtown skyline. When I asked Moakley what being a congressman meant to him, I didn't get the usual boilerplate response. Instead, he swiveled around in his leather chair and looked out the window to survey his domain. "See that building going up over there?" he asked, waving his hand toward a new federal courthouse under construction, for which Moakley had secured millions of dollars in funding. "I'm very proud of that." Then he swiveled a few degrees to his left. "And this new bridge over there," he said with another gesture. "That's a bridge I put in. I got $248 million." Moakley paused, then gestured again. "Got $100 million a year for the last four or five years to clean up Boston Harbor," he added. He didn't even bother to mention the Big Dig, the massive construction of a highway underneath Boston, funded with billions of federal dollars. "These are all things that people consider pork," Moakley said. "But if that's pork—hey, put me down as Number One."

THE MEDIA TENDS TO FOCUS ON THE influence of big-money donors in Washington. But pork is at least as powerful a force—and it benefits many more people. In John Farrell's recent biography of Tip O'Neill, *Tip O'Neill and the Democratic Century*, Moakley tells of joining O'Neill at a 1991 meeting about the Patriot missile with representatives from the Massachusetts-based Raytheon Corporation. "Tip is as knowledgeable about missiles as I am," Moakley recalls. "We are both still trying to figure out how a crystal radio works. So they're talking about azimuths and hit ratios and Tip is saying, 'Yeah . . . yeah . . . yeah. . . . ' Then [one Raytheon official] says, 'Tip, it will put six thousand people to work in the commonwealth.' And Tip says, 'Six thousand people!' and starts paying attention." In another scene, Moakley pleads with O'Neill to help him land a defense contract worth hundreds of jobs to his district. The speaker quickly dials the Pentagon and, as Moakley puts it, "gave [them] his best South Boston lingo and let [them] have it." The contract went to Moakley's district, and, according to the late congressman: "[B]oom, boom, boom. The unemployment rate in Taunton dropped to 3.5 percent." To this day, that's how It works. Sadly, there's now one fewer person in Washington willing to say so.

MICHAEL CROWLEY

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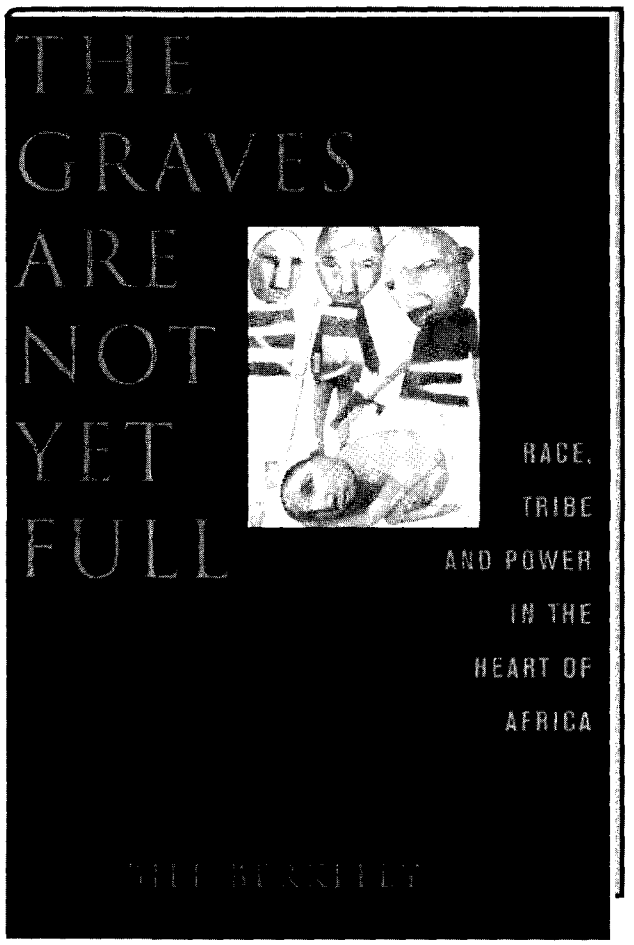

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Author of *Cold New World: Growing Up in a Harder Country*

BILL BERKELEY has been an editorial writer at *The New York Times* and for more than a decade reported on African affairs for *The Atlantic Monthly, The New Republic, The New York Times Magazine* and *The Washington Post.*

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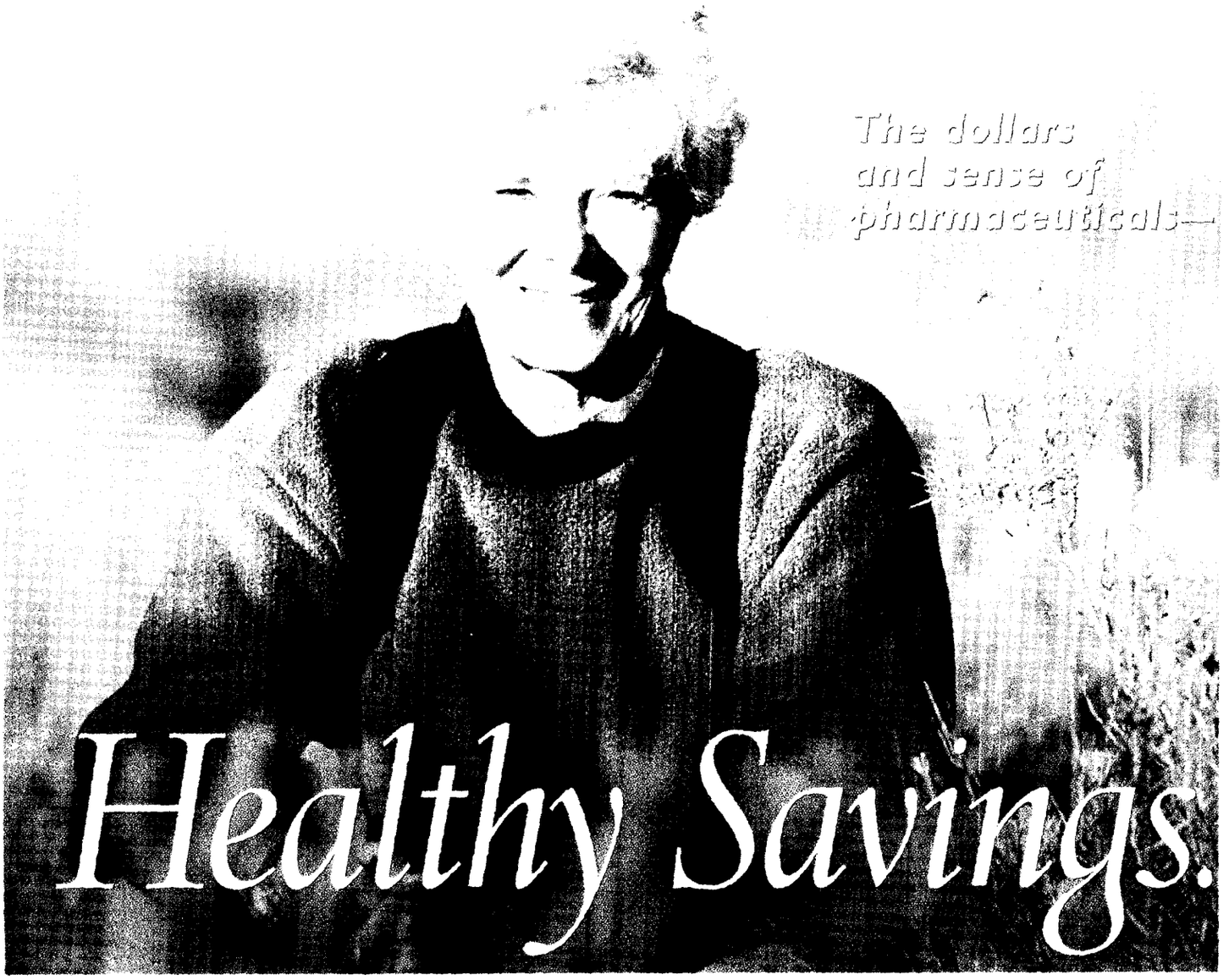

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